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Big wall climbs are all about getting out in the wilderness and spending multiple days and nights on the largest rock faces in the world. Brought to you by John Middendorf.

Note: the original bigwalls.net website was one of the first climbing sites on the internet, created when there were only a few thousand websites on the whole internet. It was hand-coded in the early 1990's and an early version can be seen here : [Wayback Machine Bigwalls.net website \(1996\)](#). A5 was also one of the first climbing manufacturers with a website: [A5 Adventures online catalog, 1995](#)

Adventures on the Big Stones (my 1990s slideshow):

- [Big Wall Slide Show \(140 pictures with descriptions\)](#)
-

Big Wall Techniques

- [Big Wall Tech Manual \(PDF version, an edited copy\)](#)

Big Wall Info:

- [The Trango Towers, Pakistan \(1992 expedition info\)](#)
- [Nose-in-a-Day \(the original NIAD beta, 1988\)](#)
- [Big Wall Difficulty Ratings](#)
- [Big Wall Equipment](#)
- [Yosemite Climbs](#)
- [Zion Climbs](#)
- [Mountain Review Zion Article](#)
- [El Trono Blanco, Mexico](#)
- [Mt. Hooker, Wyoming](#)
- [The Troll Wall in Norway](#)
- [a few big walls](#)
- [Four Walls \(Mountain Review Article, 1993\)](#)
- [Escudo 1994](#)
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Selected Published Articles by [John Middendorf](#)

- [The Grand Voyage, Great Trango Tower, with Xaver Bongard \(1992\)](#)
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- [The Totem Pole with Jim Bridwell\(1990\)](#)
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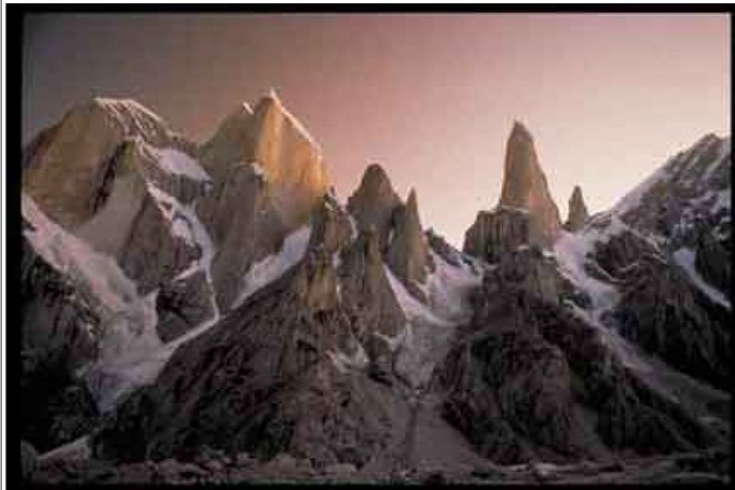
[Garbology 101-Keeping the Mountains Pristine](#)

- [Heroes of climbing](#)
- [Peanut Sauce Recipe](#)
- [Caving in New Mexico\(1995\)](#)
- [Climbing in Cuba](#)

Yosemite Camp 4 Crisis (1998):

- [Camp4Yosemite.com: the documents that helped save Camp 4 in 1998](#)
 - [John Middendorf Statement for the Camp 4 lawsuit](#)
 - [Information on historic NEPA action in Yosemite](#)
 - [Joshua Tree Fixed Anchor Issue](#)
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Big Wall Showcase



Above: The Trango Towers from the Dungee Glacier



Above: Anarctica



Above: the Russian route on the west face of Great Trango, from the Trango Glacier.



Above: New route on the Pulpit, East Summit of Great Trango behind.



Above: Cerro Torre and friends



Above: Bhagaratti IV (unclimbed wall) and Bhagaratti III



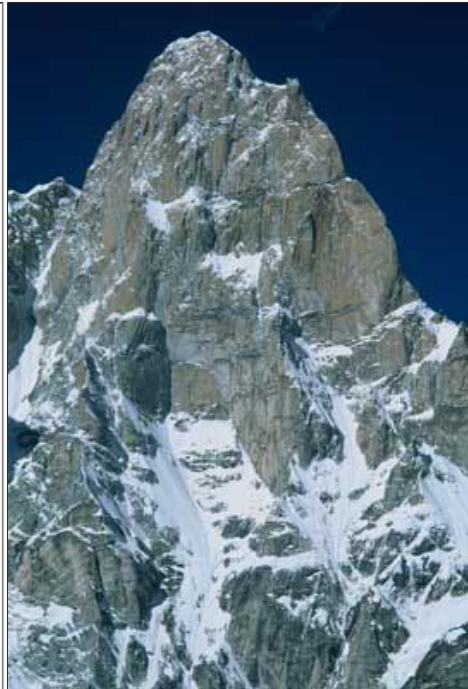
Above: Troll Wall, Norway



The view from COSMOS



Above: Autana, Venezuela



Latok 3, Pakistan



Another shot of the NW face of Great Trango

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The First Ascent of Abraham

by John Middendorf

The current craze of sport climbing has definite advantages for the so-called "traditional" climber, namely, lessened competition for adventuresome unclimbed rock. Zion canyon is an example, with its abundant unclimbed natural lines up huge steep rock walls. An area where the modern use of camming units, nuts, pitons and a few bolts can take a team 2000 feet up a virgin, mostly overhanging, clean and committing big-wall, complete with intense logistical aspects and much fear. But one has to pause in order to ask, "What's the point?". I can understand the appeal of crags, where the approaches are short, the commitment low, and eventual success virtually guaranteed with time. Pushing a new wall route in Zion is the exact opposite. Abraham, in Zion's magnificent Court of the Patriarchs canyon, is a huge mountain of sandstone with a completely sheer south face. Across the valley from Abraham lies the Sentinel, its north face resembling a cloaked specter, dark and foreboding, in the repose of a fearsome guard of its characteristically cleaner looking neighbor, Abraham. The south face of Abraham first caught my eye after a summer thunderstorm, the wall shining with brilliant colors in the afternoon sun. It seemed on fire, charged with an unknown abundant energy source, and almost blinding in its radiant beauty. It drew me towards it, and I became instantly obsessed with the idea of climbing it. It reminded me of the intensity of emotion I felt upon seeing El Capitan in Yosemite for the first time, driving into Yosemite Valley on a full moon night many years before. The chance to establish a route up this magnificent unclimbed wall inspired me and drove my life for the succeeding weeks.

After calling up my solid partner of many fine adventures past, Walt Shipley, we confirmed plans to meet in Zion. Walt and I have pulled off some good ascents together: a new route on Half Dome (the Kali-Yuga), the first winter ascent of Zenyatta Mendatta on El Cap, acid solos of various Yosemite 5.10's and 5.11's, and assorted classic desert spires (Moses, Zeus, and the Titan). I had the suspicion that even as a strong team, this route on Abraham was going to push our limits of ability. Zion's intimidation factor aside, the wall was bigger and steeper than anything else in Zion, where the rule of thumb is to expect each 1000 feet of sandstone to seem like 2000 feet of granite.

Walt and I met in Springdale at the Rock house, the traditional staging ground, and after a few beers, went to scope the route. The mood was somewhat tense, as it often is before embarking on a major vertical journey. "You gotta want those big jobs" is the mantra for the small circle of serious wall climbers in Yosemite. The pointlessness of committing to an extended trip to the vertical seems to encourage drinking in the nearest bar and/or venturing on shorter climbs instead of following the transitory and sourceless inspiration to climb a big route.

With binoculars, we sat in the meadow below the route and viewed possible lines. We saw evidence of previous attempts up several crack systems near the base. One set of rappel anchors two pitches up the center of the face led to nowhere, obviously the result of an optimistic attempt to find some feature unseen from the ground. The main wall was entirely blank, completely devoid of any features. The huge buttress on its right flank looked promising, with its obvious crack systems up either side. The left side of the buttress looked broken and serious, one 300 foot section looking like vertical caving up a giant chimney filled with house-size loose blocks. We spotted a overhanging and beautiful thin crack system splitting the center of the buttress. Investigating more closely, it appeared to blank out 3/4 of the way up. We hiked around to get a closer look and noticed rappel slings from high up on the right side of the buttress. Knowing Abraham to be unclimbed by any route, we were nearly dismayed that someone had even gotten close, wanting the complete prize for ourselves. The right side looked all right, very long, not too steep and broken by a series of ledges and corners. The scale is immense, and seemingly small features looked like several pitches on closer examination. But then we saw it, the missing link for the awesome center route, a right facing corner system, invisible from our previous viewing angle, that connected the lower crack system to the top. From no single vantage point can both crack systems be viewed clearly, but from different spots, the route became clear and continuous, albeit unrelentingly thin and technical. Committing, we fixed a pitch in a light Zion rainstorm, sheltered from the overhanging wall above.

We planned for four days, somehow not believing the wall was as big as it seemed. We brought a small bolt kit, limiting ourselves to 40 bolts to lighten our load and to increase our sense of commitment. We carried two haulbags which consisted of bivouac gear, portaledge, food and water for 4 days, and the usual big-wall monster load of hardware. Getting

to the base of most Zion routes consists of bushwhacking up vertical gulleys, and this route was no exception.

Our first day on the route went well. Four pitches up the route we were faced with our first major logistical problem. We had to cross over a huge corner/gulley system in order to gain the base of the crack which split the center of the overhanging wall above. Walt led across a bold unprotected 5.10+ section which led to the base of the crack which would take us 1500 feet to the summit. But instead of hauling this section, which would have surely resulted in major snagging of the haulbag in the broken gulley below, we left our bags perched on a ledge, and hauled after finishing the next pitch.

The next day I led a 5.9+ offwidth for breakfast, unprotected and pumper in the hot Zion sun. The wall changed to overhanging, and already retreat was looking like a challenging potential in itself. We came to the realization that we had underestimated the length and seriousness of the wall, but continued on as all good climbers do in the face of uncertainty. The next 1000 feet looked like steep knifeblading up thin cracks. One soon learns, especially after cleaning a Zion sandstone aid pitch, that what would be an A1 placement in granite becomes instant A3; that is, even ringer pitons are removed with merely a few hits from the hammer. Yet we relished in the climbing, nailing our coveted knifeblades and birdbeaks repeatedly as we ascended.

Day three seemed like day 4, or was it still day 2? Time became surrealistic as we ascended. On pitch 9, after leading a thin expanding knifeblade pillar, I placed the first bolts of the route, for a belay. Even though the previous five belays were in overhanging sandstone thin cracks, it was a point of pride between Walt and myself not to place any extraneous bolts, though we sacrificed both comfort and peace of mind because of this. Though the climbing had been consistently A3 or A3+ knifeblading (Zion sandstone ratings), we had been blessed to find belays in A1 or A2 sections at intervals concurrent with our ropelength. It became a test of the mind to ignore the fact that any shockload on the belays (from a fall) would have likely ripped out the natural belays.

Three quarters of the way up, we traversed right into the right facing corner system, and Walt led a fabulous 5.10 hand crack, a nice reprieve from the endless knifeblading. We were not long for the summit, which loomed 500 feet above us. Our provisions were definitely getting low. We recounted the days, and discovered that we would possibly top out on day 4, but that our water would never last that long. It was May in Zion, and the temperatures exceeded 100 degrees. We had planned four days, Yosemite rations; that is, 1/2 gallon per person per day. But in the Utah desert heat, we needed more, though we were rationing and were severely dehydrated as it was.

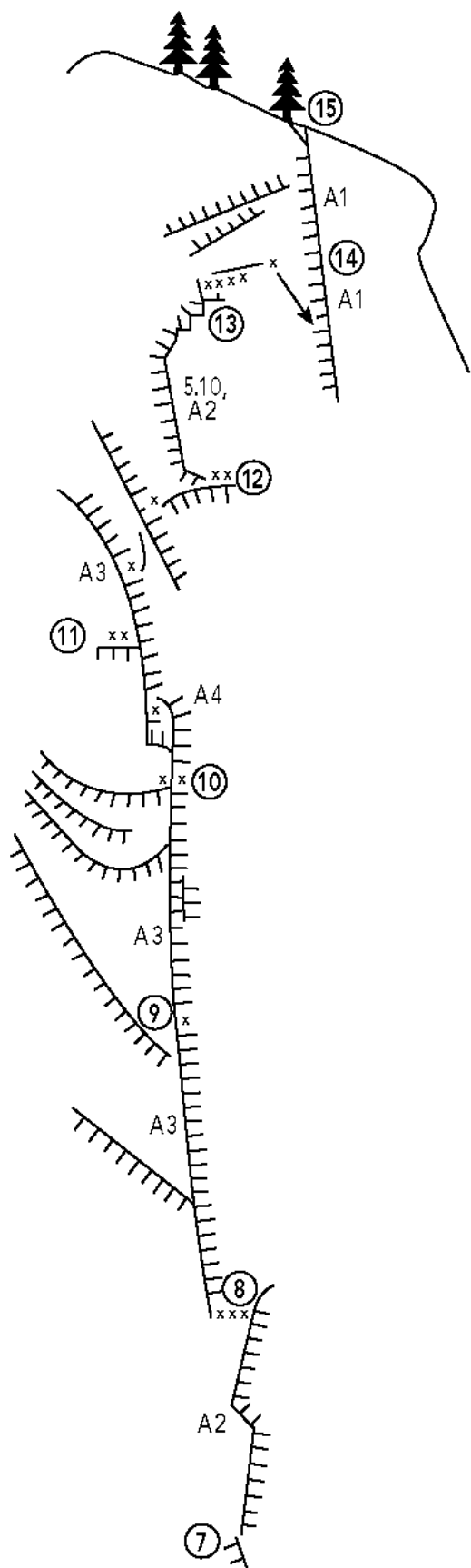
Late on the fourth day, we reached the top of the buttress, and drank the last of our water. We had only started out that day with 1/2 gallon for the two of us, making our consumption for the day about a pint each. Not too good for the extremely hot conditions. Dehydration was starting to take its toll, our bodies stiff and sore from lack of water.

The next morning, we tossed one of the haulbags, sure it would be lost forever in the steep brushy gulleys below. It disappeared out of sight, hit the wall below, and rocketed out toward the base, landing smack on top of a boulder at the base. It was a shot in a thousand. Before the morning heat arrived, we made a dash for the summit, soloing 5.6 sandy slabs. The summit view was excellent, and we peered down the overhanging South Face, wishing we had the gear and the experience to base jump it for a quick descent.

Instead, we made our way down, clumsily due to the heat and the acute dehydration effects we were now experiencing. Which way down? After collecting our gear at the top of the buttress, we started what was to be 14 long and tiresome rappels down the East flank of Abraham. We were in danger of running out of bolts, and sometimes only placed one bolt for an anchor in the soft and sandy rock. At one point the ropes got stuck. In our delirium of dehydration, we sat motionless on a small ledge for a while, wanting to sleep and be done with it. Then Walt, unanchored, got up suddenly and maniacally started jumping on the rope. Without warning, the anchor pulled and Walt careened backward, almost falling off the ledge backward with the ropes. Unable to help, I had the grim vision of being stranded on this small ledge, unseen from anyone on the ground, Walt's broken body lying in the hanging valley below, and waiting to die of thirst (which wouldn't have taken more than 24 hours). Walt did a couple off balanced hops on his leg on the edge of the cliff and somehow miraculously regained his stance. Wordlessly, we resumed our descent, realizing that we had been given a second chance from a higher power.

After an eternity, we made it to the hanging valley, only to be tempted by stagnant, undrinkable pools of stinky water. Three more rappels from the hanging valley took us to a bonafide natural spring, and we gorged ourselves on the best water in Zion until we couldn't move. We named the route The Radiator, VI, 5.10+, A4, a name and grade which summarized a

truly grand and extreme adventure.



The Radiator

VI 5.10 A4 PDW (Pretty Damn Western)
Court of the Patriarchs, Abraham

Hardware:

6-8 Birdbeaks

KB: 2 ea.

LAs: 10-12

3-4 ea. 1/2"

2-3 ea. 5/8"

2-3 ea. 3/4"

1 ea. sawed-off 1" to 1 1/2"

2 Leeper Zs

2 sets HB Offsets

2 sets Stoppers

1 ea. Hexes #5-#7

1 ea. Lowe Balls

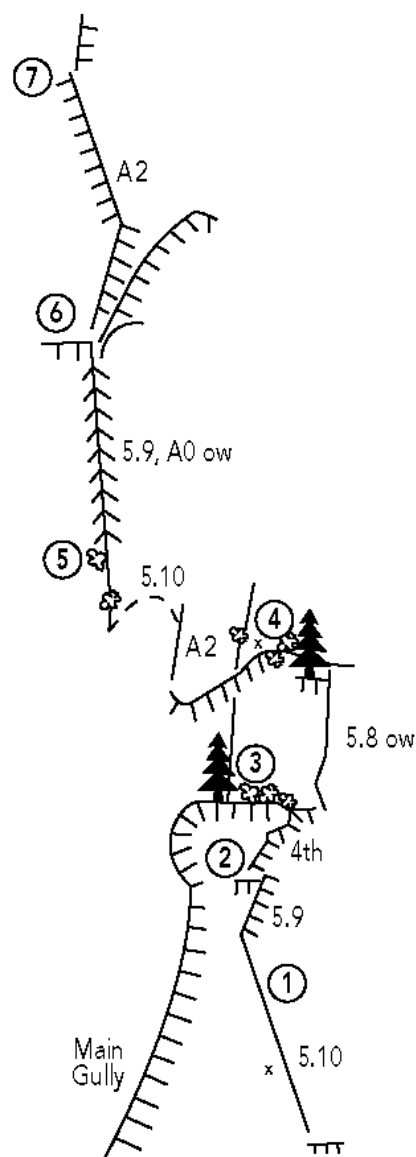
2-3 ea. black to red Aliens

1 ea. TCUs

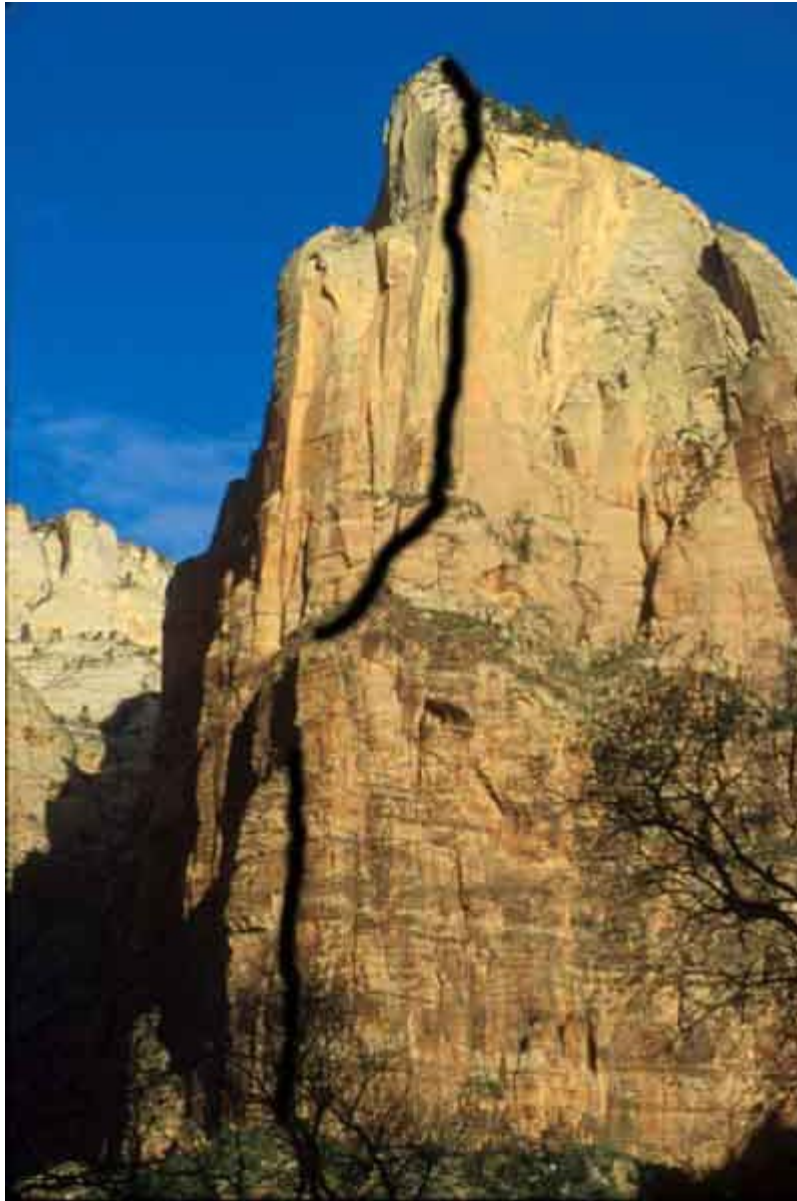
3 ea. Camalot #.5 to #4

1 ea. Camalot #5

1 ea. Bigbro #3, #4



Issac



A story by John Middendorf

Eons of time and the elements of nature have worked hand in hand in what is now known as Zion National Park to create some of the most awesome series of canyons and formations in the world. In one of the great Zion canyons lie the Court of the Patriarchs, three massive sandstone towers named after the original three biblical fathers: Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. For a climber, these outrageous walls are alluring. Issac, the proud middle Patriarch, has a 1800 foot sheer southeast face with several excellent crack systems splitting it. Jeff Lowe, Mike Weis, John Weiland, and Wick Beavers climbed one of the crack systems first in 1972. Since then, the southeast face of Issac has seen only a few repeats. The antiquated Lowe route description read nebulously, and as is typical of Zion routes, figuring out where others have gone before requires a sleuth-like approach. I'd always eyeballed a soaring 800 foot straight-in crack on the upper buttress, and wondered whether or not the Lowe route ascended that, or a long corner system to the left. Climbed or not, that stunning crack beckoned.

Establishing climbing partners in Zion often requires advanced tactics in cajoling. Zion's reputation of poisonous fauna, long bushwhack approaches, and searing heat overwhelms the fact that many of the country's most awesome big walls reside there. Sometimes you have to bribe prospective partners with tales of an excellent bar scene and fine local cuisine (at the local watering hole, The Bit and Spur in Springdale). Myself, I'll say whatever it takes.

I hooked up with Calvin Herbert, a young lad who came to Zion for a short climbing holiday, and we climbed some of the one- to two-pitch routes at the base of Zion's magnificent walls. Some of the better "Base Routes" are on Issac. At the base of Issac, I searched for a line to the series of ledges midway on the climb. Above the midway ledges, on the upper southeast buttress, was the home of the coveted 800 foot hand slightly overhanging perfect hand crack. We found a good crack system which began as a offwidth and continued into a 1000 foot long chimney system to the midway ledges. I led the first pitches of 5.10 offwidth and squeeze, and saw that the chimney above looked climbable. It was late, so we rappelled off, but I left the ropes in place for an eventual push to the top. Calvin, who was supposed to be back in Boulder the next day, immediately stated that, if need be, he would quit his job to join me for the ascent. Such is Zion climbing: at first, the walls seem too intimidating to climb, but once the initial pitches are tasted, desire overwhelms rational reason and the "real world" becomes unimportant. Later that night, while drinking potatoes and enjoying a fine Dutch-oven dinner at our friend Brad's house in Springdale, we invited Brad to join us for a team of three.

No sooner did we get started that the spring rains started to fall. Zion weather is extremely temporal, and the climbable conditions there are rare. Winter is too cold to climb, while summer is too hot. In the spring, it rains often. Zion routes require persistence, and after a series of false starts and a few days of organization, we had climbed to the midway ledges 1000 feet up, and bivouaced there. The next morning, we were caught in a huge rainstorm. We had to go down--when Zion's Navajo sandstone gets wet, it takes on the consistency of slush. A week had passed, and the realities of Calvin's employment had gained in relative importance, and he left Zion.

We invited Bill Hatcher along, world famous photographer, to take his place. After a few calls to Bill, plus a trip to Flagstaff to prime him on the route, Brad, Bill, and I proceeded to bushwhack through manzanita for the umpteenth time to the base of Issac for another attempt. We carried food and bivouac gear for three days, and, courtesy Bill, a good bottle of whiskey.

The first day we made it to the midway ledges, our previous high point, where we spent the night, tired from a long day of toiling up 100 vertical feet. We drank the whiskey, told lies, and passed out..

The wall gets first light, and was beautiful as the warm early morning glow turned it into a visual inferno. We got an early start and continued up the upper headwall. After a couple difficult free climbing pitches, the crack pinched off and required 60 feet of nailing. We were dissatisfied: up to that point, the entire wall was free. Then the crack opened up and the straight-in overhanging handcracks I'd dreamed of became a reality. Most excellent, exposure and unclimbed perfect cracks.

Many pitches later, we made it to the top shortly before dusk, and searched for a scarce flat spot on the summit, which amazingly still had snow on it despite the warm daytime temperatures. After 3rd classing to the summit the next morning, we began our descent, which, like all Zion descents, proved to have its own brand of desperation and toil. We eventually exited at an outrageous hanging waterfall which we rappelled down to once again meet the estranged but blessed terra firma.



Summary: Issac, V, 5.10+, A2. Start on the center crack on the outermost lower buttress of Issac. Upper route follows the obvious splitter on the upper buttress. Two days for the first ascent; one full day for the descent. 19 pitches for 1800 feet of climbing. All free except for 60 feet with many pitches of 5.10 (note: "Zion 5.10" is a relative grading) offwidth and handcracks.

Equipment: Standard Zion freeclimbing rack (2-3 sets of cams, hexes, and stoppers), plus 10 pitons including 2 knifeblades, 3 birdbeaks, three horizontals, one each 1/2 inch and 5/8 inch angles.



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Cleaning Pitons in Sandstone

The standard method of cleaning pitons involves hammering them back and forth in the direction of the crack until they eventually loosen. With repeated placements in a vertical crack, a circular hole develops, generally requiring the future repeated use of pitons. With a little extra effort, it is possible to clean pitons in a manner that will tend to eventually create a clean (hammerless) placement for subsequent ascents. The technique involves hitting the pin more in the upward direction rather than the downward direction. To begin, hit the pin in the upward direction as far as it will travel. On the downward blows, stop when the piton is about horizontal, rather than hitting it as far down as it will travel. The scar that develops is more triangular shaped and more likely to accept a stopper or a TCU in the future. It is good practice in soft rock to leave pitons whose cleaning could permanently destroy a placement.

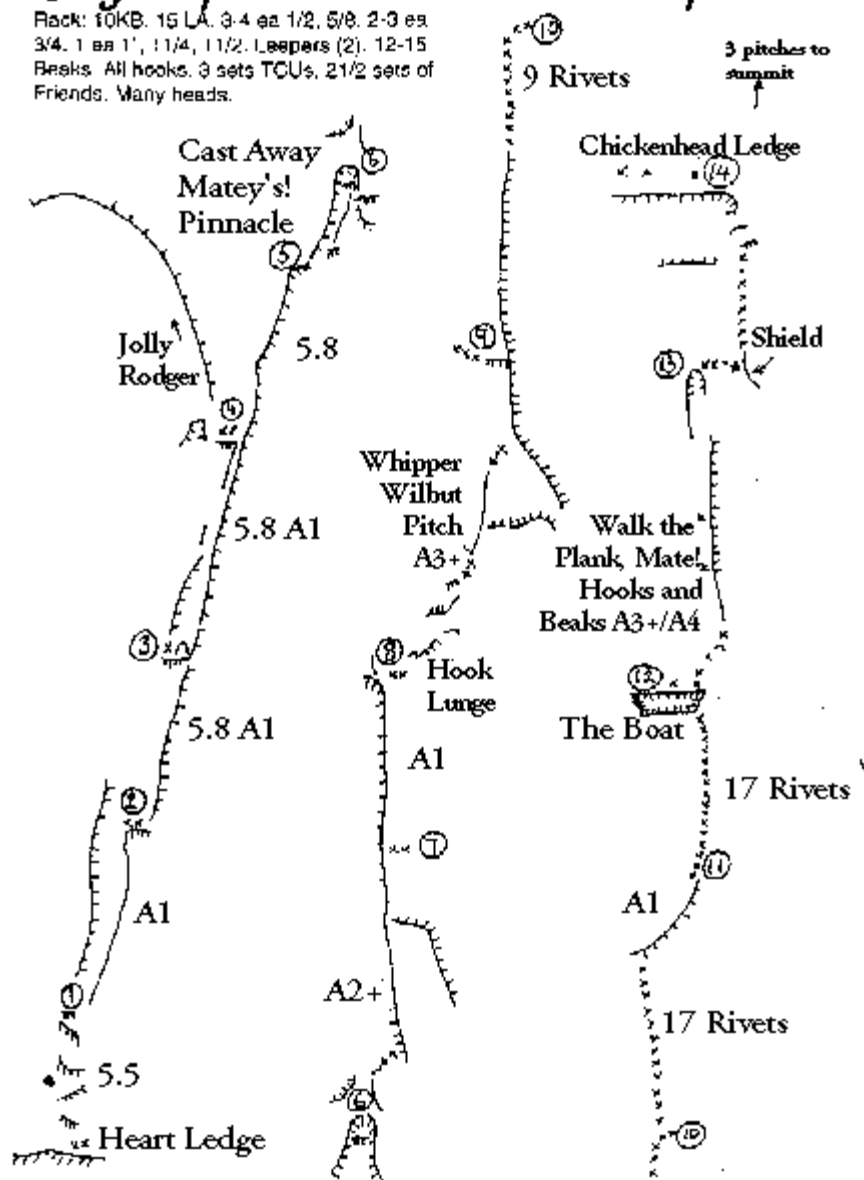


EL CAPITAN- FLIGHT OF THE ALBATROSS

Location: El Capitan, Yosemite National Park, CA (text by John Middendorf)

Flight of the Albatross, El Capitan

Rack: 10KB. 15 LA. 3-4 ea 1/2, 5/8. 2-3 ea 3/4. 1 ea 1', 1 1/4, 1 1/2. Leapers (2). 12-15 Beaks. All hooks. 3 sets TCUs. 2 1/2 sets of Friends. Many heads.



Difficulty: 5.10, A3+/A4, 7 days spent of the first ascent.

Will Oxx and I climbed a new route to the left of the Shield in the spring of 1993. I had pieced this route together over years of scoping out sections. In the mid 1980's, I had seen the middle part, 450 feet of good cracks rising from Grey ledges well into the Shield Headwall, to where it blanks out for 220 feet. Several pitches below Chickenhead ledge, (500 feet below the summit), a huge canoe shaped flake which seemed to defy gravity was attached to the headwall, and from there, a clearly visible crack went to Chickenhead ledge. When I climbed the Salathe for the second time just prior to this ascent, I saw a 500 foot crack system which was not part of any other route splitting the center of the 100 foot wide dihedral which forms the bottom part of the famous Heart formation on El Cap. Final scoping with a telescope

revealed a flake system spitting the blank section on the Shield headwall. All in all, it turned out to be 180 feet of blank rock (requiring rivet ladders) in 1400 feet of new climbing.

El Capitan, with over 60 routes and variations, is so crisscrossed with routes that it is hard to imagine squeezing more in without extensive drilling, but since the last really good lines were bagged in the late 1980's, new routes have required more and more drilling through large blank sections to link natural features. Many new routes on El Capitan have required over 100 holes to complete, though many have required fewer (the Atlantic Ocean Wall, for example, required 58 new holes--bolts and rivets--to complete). I estimated that we could do this new route with less than 75 holes total, so my philosophic reservations about ethical matters was resolved.

We began in fine weather, fixing up to Heart Ledges and hauling gear up. Like most big wall routes, this one had its most difficult moments getting started the first few days. Will dropped my Swiss army knife the first night from Heart Ledge, and I went into a foul mood. The pitches from Heart to Grey were largely filled with dirt and mud, making for some unpleasant A1 climbing. At Grey Ledges, we were hit by a raging storm for about 18 hours, and we got soaked in our low angle, ledgeless location at the top of Greys. We still had enough ropes to fix down to the Mammoth Terrace, where we suspected we would still find some other party's fixed ropes to the ground. Luckily we had a small espresso maker and stove to allow us a diversion from the cold, soaked conditions, otherwise, we may have bailed. While we were getting hammered by the storm, huddled in our portaledge, we envied the team above us on the Shield Headwall who were not even using their portaledge rainfly, due to the overhanging wall above.

Above Grey, the climbing got steeper and more difficult. One of the pitches was a superb Wheat Thin type flake, which is mostly invisible from the ground because of its thin profile. Will then led a hard and steep pitch (A3+) which took us onto the Shield Headwall proper. The pitch, which we named the "Whipper Will" pitch, overhung about 50 feet in all. From there an A2 lost arrow crack led to the sea of blankness on the headwall. We drilled for 100 feet, climbed a 40 foot flake, and drilled for 80 more feet to the Canoe flake, and huge detached flake resting on a sloping stance up there. This was a perfect bivouac: flat, 2 feet wide, and 40 feet long, though I made the mistake of hammering a pin behind it as part of the belay. After a few hits, the entire block (which must have weighed 15 tons), shifted a bit. We left the pin without cleaning it. Above the Canoe, a thin A3+ or A4 seam continued up, requiring many beaks and #1 and #2 copperheads. The dangerous ledge fall on this pitch precludes this route from becoming any immediate moderate classic, but besides this and the Whipper Will pitch, all the climbing was of moderate difficulty.

In unsettled weather, we finished from Chickenhead on the Shield, regretting later that we did not do an obvious direct finish to the right. The direct finish is recommended for subsequent ascents of this fine route up El Cap, which is likely to become a classic.



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John William Middendorf IV:
Extreme walls, American style
by
Cameron M. Burns

When John Middendorf and Xaver Bongard summited Great Trango Tower on July 28, 1992, the conclusion of 18 days of difficult and exceptionally dangerous climbing, their names became household words among climbers. Nearly every major mountaineering publication carried news of the pair's achievement and it gave Middendorf and Bongard a place in Himalayan - and world - mountaineering history. It was, possibly, the most difficult wall climb ever done.

But for the then 32-year-old John William Middendorf IV, it was just the culmination of half a lifetime's worth of training for his ultimate goal: to climb the world's most extreme cliffs, and do it in impeccable style. And, with his eyes set on Patagonia, Baffin Island and other areas, Middendorf is just hitting his stride.

"He's certainly in the forefront of what's going on right now," concedes Jim Bridwell, an American wall climbing legend and friend. "I think he's trying hard routes and doing a good job on them, certainly in good style. I recognize his ability."

But life wasn't always a challenging for the son of a New York investment banker and a nurse - a guy who grew up the perfect nerd and was even bullied by other kids at school.

In fact, there were times when Middendorf wanted nothing to do with big rock faces, and even feared their looming bulk and the awesome natural forces they represent.

EARLY DAYS

Born Nov. 18, 1959, in New York City, young John William grew up in Greenwich Connecticut, with three sisters and a brother. When he was 11, the family moved to Holland, where they lived for 3 years. Upon returning to the U.S. in 1973, the family moved to McLean, Virginia. Although he would later make extensive cragging trips throughout the East Coast, young John's first experience rockclimbing came when 14-year-old John was shipped off to summer camp in Telluride, Colorado.

Ice, snow and rock climbing, and other mountain craft were all part of the curriculum. Dave Farny, the instructor, taught his students not only to climb, but how to exist in the mountains. Minimal impact was practiced religiously, and the lessons would have a big influence on Middendorf in later years.

Middendorf returned twice in the following years, guiding teens younger than himself.

At age 15, he began top-roping at Carder Rock and Great Falls. Middendorf got better and better. He did trips to Seneca, the Gunks, when he was 15 and 16. At the ripe old age of 17, he headed off to Yosemite for his first wall climbing experiences.

"When I was a junior in high school, I went out to Yosemite one summer and climbed Half Dome, Washington Column, the East Buttress of El Cap," recalls Middendorf. "I'd been climbing for three years. I got pretty serious about it."

Although there were a lot of young climbers in 1976, there weren't a lot of 17

year-olds cruising Half Dome.

"There's just awesome long walls everywhere in Yosemite. I knew right away that's what I wanted to do," he recalls. "All I'd seen before that were small crags, and all of a sudden I'm looking at these 2,000 and 3,000-foot cliffs and I'm going - wow!"

Middendorf completed high school in 1977, a straight A student. "I was a nerd," he recalls. "I wasn't athletic at all. In fact, I was always getting beaten up by the bullies."

He then attended Dartmouth College for two years studying engineering there, Middendorf became involved with a group of eastern climbers that included Neil Cannon, Thom Englebach, Steve Chardon, and Ted Johnson. By the age of 19, in 1978, Middendorf was climbing 5.11, not bad considering the top grades of the day were only 5.11+. Middendorf also got into ice. He and Englebach made several ice excursions in the northeast, including solos of several classics at Huntington's Ravine on Mt. Washington.

"They were way over our heads, actually," Middendorf remembers.

After two years at Dartmouth, Middendorf transferred to Stanford University near San Francisco. Weekends were spent on jaunts to Yosemite Valley. He graduated with a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering, with honors.

For most summers during college, Middendorf worked on his career, getting jobs in engineering, and honing himself for a career under flickering fluorescent lights and wearing slide rules in his shirt pocket. However, in 1981, during his third year at university, Middendorf took 6 months off to go on a cragging tour of Australia. The choice to climb over preparing for an exciting career in the world of engineering was a harbinger of things to come in the young man's life.

"They hadn't seen a lot of Americans over there at that time. Maybe a handful," he recalls. "So, I got good, royal, treatment because they all wanted to sandbag the Yank. I was in the newspaper over there: 'Visiting American Comes to Climb at Our Local Rocks' and it was Arapiles, which is of course now known as one of the best crags in the world."

Middendorf returned to the states, graduated from Stanford, sold almost all his climbing gear, bought a motorcycle, then toured the country doing job interviews.

"It was going to be my last little stint," he says of the motorcycle trip. "It was like, OK, youth's over, gotta go work. I could climb working as an engineer, but up to then I spent a lot of time living in Joshua Tree or Yosemite, and I really knew that is what I loved the most was to spend an extended period of time climbing. It's all climbers' dream, I imagine. And, I realized that doing that and working a 9-to-5 job were two mutually incompatible things. So I basically said climbing will be a part of my life, but I've got to buckle down and become an engineer."

Yeah, John. Sure.

After one interview in Santa Barbara, for what sounded like "a pretty dull job," his next interview was in Ohio. On a whim, he decided to spend a week in Yosemite, before motoring out east, where he'd no doubt buckle down and become part of middle America.

Middendorf knew a few climbers in Yosemite from his college days. He stayed a while, climbed a little, and, in his own way, said good-bye to America's premier crag.

Just as Middendorf was preparing to leave California, Werner Braun planted a seed in the young engineer's head.

"He suggested to me I get on the rescue team. There were a couple of spots

open," says Middendorf. "It was February of 1984. I ended up getting on the rescue team and ended up staying for two and a half years."
So much for the proverbial corporate ladder.

YOSEMITE APPRENTICE

It's easy to drift into some sort of ambivalence in Yosemite, where each day is strung together between visits to the Yosemite Lodge Cafeteria and hours in campsite procrastinating over routes and thumbing through the guidebook. One wall climbed makes exceptional fodder for putting off another. Call it a side affect of the Valley syndrome, call it the doldrums, but in Yosemite, even if you're motivated, it's easy to just hang out.

Not so, for John William the fourth.

His 2 1/2 years in the valley, from 1984-86, produced a remarkable resume of wall routes, traditional free routes, solos and, most importantly, first ascents.

"I did at least 12 walls every year, I climbed El Cap every month of the year, I did almost 40 walls in that time," he said. "I must've climbed with 100 different people while I was there. I was fucking motivated."

His partners included some of the nation's best, and most famous, climbers: Braun, John Bachar, Walt Shipley, Scott Cosgrove, Dave Schultz, John Barbella, Mike Corbett, Steve Bosque, Rick Lovelace, and Alex Lowe to name a few.

"Werner Braun was my main mentor when I was in the valley for sure," said Middendorf. "He's got a really pure attitude about climbing. That rubbed off a lot."

Although the Atlantic Ocean Wall (VI, 5.10, A5) on El Capitan, (first climbed with John Barbella in 1985), was a noteworthy achievement, Middendorf sees the route as something of a consolation prize after just missing out on Lost In America.

"I had done 15 El Cap routes, but I really wanted to do a new one," he recalls. "And I had a few picked out, but they kept getting stolen, like Lost in America. I was really psyched to do that line. I had made a map and everything. I remember I told Charles Cole about it, because we were buddies at the time. I borrowed his telescope to look at it. He come over and looked at it and said 'yeah, that's a good line.' A couldn't find anyone to climb it with me, so I was going to solo it. Back then, I tell you, it was really hard to find wall climbing partners. There just weren't many people who wanted to do hard routes. So I soloed 'Never Never Land' as training. I got back, and Charles met me in the (El Cap) Meadow, and he said: 'I've got some bad news for you.' I knew exactly what he was talking about."

Randy Leavitt and Greg Child were on the route. In vain, Middendorf hiked to the base of the wall and began taunting the pair, trying to psych them into giving it up.

"I was like: 'Hey, you guys. You guys having fun up there? It's pretty hot isn't it?'" The taunting didn't work, and Middendorf had lost his prize.

"Then I did the A.O.," he laments. "It's only like three-quarters of a new line. It joins New Jersey turnpike. The true prizes are fully independent routes."

Still, for a consolation, the Atlantic Ocean is a striking climb, taking an uncompromising line, and a couple of big roofs, before joining the New Jersey Turnpike, 15 leads up.

And Middendorf did get to put up some now coveted classics, most of them toward the top end of the scale. Autobahn (V, 5.11c), for example, which takes a wild line up the southeast corner of Half Dome, was climbed with Charles Cole and Rusty Reno. Middendorf led the crux pitch, mandatory 5.11+ freeclimbing, that earned him some criticism for not making the lead aid-climable.

Regardless, the climb was labeled "brilliant, a five star route" by Climbing

Magazine in 1986.

Another big tick for Middendorf was the first winter ascent of "Zenyatta Mondatta" (VI, 5.10, A5), with Walt Shipley, in 1985, one of the more difficult lines on the big stone. Shipley, who bailed off after a few pitches because he feared bad weather, then returned, says Middendorf was the driving force behind that climb.

SPEED ASCENTS

While Middendorf's mid-1980s sojourn in the Valley produced a raft of traditional free and wall routes, some of which have since become hard classics, it was probably speed climbing where Middendorf and his various partners made their biggest mark.

Speed climbing is something much more difficult to track than normal first ascents, and often, goes unrecorded altogether. During his Valley years, Middendorf managed to pull off the first one-day ascent of the direct route on Lost Arrow Spire in 8 hours with Dave Schultz; the West Face of El Cap, in four hours; the Northwest Face of Half Dome, with Hidetaka Suzuki in 7 hours; South Face of Washington Column in four hours, and Astroman and Rostrum in a day with John Bachar. Middendorf and Schultz also had what was probably a record time on the Nose, 10 1/2 hours, climbed on the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year. Other parties had faster times, but had used fixed ropes in the process. Middendorf and Schultz did not.

In fact, one of his earliest climbs in the valley was a speed ascent of Hockalito - Mescalito with the Hockey Night in Canada start - in 1984 with Alex Lowe, in just 3 1/2 days. It was one of Middendorf's first nailing routes, and the pair sped up the cliff in what was likely record time.

"Even my first big nailing routes, I knew I kind of had knack for it," says Middendorf. "Plus I was climbing with great partners, too. But I really felt like I could push the wall climbing aspect of climbing. I was doing a lot of these routes in fast times. But I wanted to push it to wall climbing. I really wanted to do the Zodiac in a day because I knew that would go."

While high-speed wall climbing was somewhat popular in the mid-1980s, it wasn't that popular, and Middendorf had a hard time finding a partner for the Zodiac.

In 1985, longtime Valley resident Mike Corbett expressed interest in doing the Shield in a day. It wasn't the Zodiac, but Middendorf had no choice as Corbett wasn't up for a one-day ascent of the Zodiac.

The pair left at midnight, and managed to climb 24 pitches, to Chickenhead Ledge, in 17 hours. They had just a few hundred feet to go.

"It was like 7:30 at night," Middendorf remembers. "It was getting dark. We got the headlamps out. It was a really cold and windy day that day, and we didn't really bring many warm clothes. In fact, I had a t-shirt and a pair of Gramiccis. Mike was wearing about the same. We weren't prepared at all. We were prepared as if we were doing the Nose in a day, which was a mistake. To do a long aid route in a day, you want to bring a couple days worth of food and warm clothes."

One of the party's two headlamps was broken, and with enthusiasm waning, the pair decided to camp out. That night a storm hit. The climbers shivered all night. At 3 a.m., it started raining, sleeting and then snowing.

The pair struggled up the last three pitches, still managing to do the wall in under 36 hours, probably the fastest ascent of the Shield at that time.

"I think, in a way, that route was a pioneering effort," muses Middendorf. "Even though it wasn't the first one day ascent of a nailing route. It wasn't until like 5 years later that people were teaming up to do these nailing routes in a day."

"Now I'm too old for that kind of stuff."

RESCUE ON THE SOUTH FACE OF HALF DOME

Remarkably, in March, 1986, Middendorf quit wall climbing altogether. He had been climbing the Harding-Rowell route on the South Face of Half Dome, with Steve Bosque and Mike Corbett. The trio were three days up on the cliff, one pitch above the Cyclops Eye, when a wild storm hit. It turned out to be one of the worst in Yosemite history.

Because of the physical nature of the rock, in a storm, the South Face route becomes one of the rock's larger water drainages.

"It almost killed us. We had a two-foot waterfall pounding down on us for a day and a half," says Middendorf grimly. "Our portaledge couldn't handle it. They'd fall apart on us on a regular basis. And it was freezing cold water. We were soaked, and it lasted for about 30 hours, all through the night. Then it started to get cold, and started snowing and sleeting on us. It snowed like 5 feet on the ground. But on the wall it was snowing like five feet a minute because of the way the wall was, long-angle. The rock was basically covered with a four-inch sheet of ice. There was just no way We couldn't move. Our ropes were just solid chunks of ice."

To make matters worse, the trio was continually buried by avalanches of snow and ice cascading off the rock.

"It seemed like hundreds of pounds of ice," said Bosque, a longtime Valley expert himself, remembering the event. "I'm sure it was."

Although about 3 dozen rescuers worked two days getting to the top of Half Dome in miserable conditions, the trio was plucked off Half Dome by a helicopter.

"Storms are always really nutty. A bad storm on a walls is really scary," says Middendorf. "Because you're so helpless, and you can't move. Even if there's a ledge a few feet away it could take you hours to get there. Those are the most frightening, wild times. There are places where you're trapped.

"That actually scared the shit out of me, because we came so close to dying. I came down from that, and basically, I didn't climb another wall for 3 1/2 years after that."

"It changed my life, too," added Bosque. "It was a pretty close call. That was quite the epic for us. The thing drew on itself out for several days giving you time to ponder."

At one point, shortly before the rescue, Bosque and Corbett thought Middendorf was dead. Slumped over in slings with snow quickly covering his body, Bosque and Corbett were certain Middendorf "had left us." Middendorf hadn't. He was just sleeping. Bosque, trying to figure out Middendorf's condition, stepped on him, waking him up.

"He was really hard core," recalls Bosque. I think he even had tennis shoes on. He was so calm during the whole thing."

The South Face route should have been Middendorf's 40th long route in Yosemite. But as it was, the event affected Middendorf so deeply, that it was a key factor in his decision to quit Yosemite in 1986, and move to Arizona.

"I was doing all these routes, and was feeling a little bit invulnerable, I think, like I could withstand any kind of storm," Middendorf says pensively. "And no matter how hard the climbing was I could fire it off in fast time. It seemed like walls were cake, like I just had them wired. I still don't feel like I've mastered them, but back then I did feel like I'd mastered them.

"Then I got hit by this storm and I felt so helpless, nearly died, and that was it."

GO EAST (TO FLAGSTAFF), YOUNG MAN

By 1986, Middendorf was ready to leave Yosemite.

"It's tough to say the reasons," he recalls, adding that the Half Dome rescue was just one of several factors. "I just knew it was time to move on. I was more ambitious than just in climbing, and starting a business was a good project." The business Middendorf decided to start - with the help of a small inheritance - was A5.

"I realized there was no gear around for wall climbers. There were no good hammers available, there were no good portaledge. It wasn't being made. Nobody made it. Forrest used to make some stuff, Chouinard used to make some stuff."

But by 1986, there wasn't a whole lot available.

"I first made a big wall hammer, that was my only business at first. It was an engineering project: getting the blueprints made, finding a forger to make them, and getting handles, figuring out a way to mount the handles. That was the only thing I did. I moved to Flagstaff and was doing this all out of an apartment and I was using a friend of mine's shop in town to do finish work on the hammers. I got those going, and started selling those. I made 550 hammers and sold them all."

Throughout 1987, A5 blossomed into a full-blown mail order retail outlet, which was discontinued when Middendorf moved the emphasis from rock gear to sewn equipment in 1988.

Eddie Whitmore, a well-known eastern climber, and desert climber Kyle Copeland, both sewed for A5 in the late 1980s.

"In the first couple of years it was hell," recalls Middendorf. "1988-89, I remember those years, they were just hell. Basically, everybody said there's no way you can make a big wall manufacturing company work. Nobody had any faith that there was a need for anyone to make high-quality portaledges and haul bags and big wall climbing equipment. Everybody was pessimistic, and it wasn't like I was going to find investors."

Middendorf didn't prove the naysayers wrong overnight. It took two years of hard toil before the business was breaking even. Middendorf spent most of his inheritance making A5 go.

"I sunk a lot of money into the business," Middendorf said. "It was tough. It really sucked, actually."

However, most great stories do have a happy ending.

By 1989, A5 had begun to make a little bit of money. In 1991, A5 did about \$75,000 in sales. In 1992, that number went up to \$100,000. By mid Oct. 1993, A5 had done \$125,000 and was well on its way to grossing \$150,000. A5 has blossomed enough to employ eight full-time employees.

"It's looking really good," Middendorf said. "It's still hard to keep up with demand. That's always been one of our biggest problems."

THE DESERT YEARS

Moving to Flagstaff opened up a whole new world for Middendorf: the desert. Flagstaff sits close to most of the important desert climbing areas: Zion, Canyonlands, Navajoland, etc. And like Wyoming's Wind Rivers, the Colorado Plateau offers probably more unexplored climbing potential than any other area in the country.

Except for an ascent of Castleton tower in 1980, Middendorf hardly knew the area. In his first desert year, with Bandito climber Stan Mish, Middendorf picked off the last major unclimbed Sedona spire, the Mushroom, a six-pitch prize.

"I liked that sandstone stuff," says Middendorf. "It's really similar to wall climbing in that it takes a lot of commitment. To get up a three or four pitch desert route it's got the same essence of commitment as you do on a 10-20

pitch route on granite. Sandstone's amazing. It seems like half the number of pitches is an equal experience over granite. My main fire is doing big faces, but the training you get on those desert climbs is unbeatable because it's so alpine. It's the same techniques you use on big wall routes. You've got to be proficient at moving from free to aid and back to free again, at a high standard. Plus you're always doing it with a ton of gear on."

Over the years, Middendorf has been able to climb about 35 spires, about 20 of them first ascents. Some of Middendorf's firsts have been true desert prizes. The Bear, for example, which he climbed in 1991 with American legend Jimmy Dunn, was the biggest unclimbed formation in the Monument Valley at the time.

But undoubtedly Middendorf's biggest contribution to desert climbing has been in Zion, where he climbed about 15 walls, half of those firsts.

"It's much more challenging than Yosemite," he says. "Because even if you have a splitter crack - like Lost arrow size.

In granite, that would be A1, no problem. But in Sandstone, it's almost automatically A3 because if you have to start doing a bold section off even a good section of Arrows, you can't trust the Arrows to stick in sandstone. You don't have pieces that will hold a 30-40-footer. It's much more challenging than granite."

BACK TO THE VALLEY

After the rescue on Half Dome, Middendorf stayed away for three years. Finally, in October, 1989, he returned, and immediately set about resurrecting his superb Yosemite wall career, climbing four major walls in just five weeks.

One of the highlights of that trip in Yosemite, was the first ascent of the "Kali Yuga," (VI, 5.10, A4) on Half Dome, which he climbed with wall ace Walt Shipley, one of the world's best wall climbers.

Shipley had been working on Kali Yuga solo, and by late October, when Middendorf arrived in the Valley, had just pulled down the last of his gear to await the spring.

"It was his idea to go back up on it," recalls Shipley. "I wasn't really all that psyched on it having spent the previous month on it. It just wasn't working for me. But, I remember he was all psyched on it."

"We were a little worried about weather, but when I was with John, right away I knew I was going to do the climb. That was kind of a breaking point for him. He hadn't done any walls since he's been rescued. I didn't know it at the time, about the rescue. We didn't even talk about it. It wasn't any thorn in my side, but I guess it bothered him. He was all psyched after we did the climb. He was glad to get back into it with such a glorious route."

Except for two gear placements on Tis-sa-ack, Kali Yuga was an completely new route on one of the world's most coveted pieces of stone.

It snowed on the pair on the last day, which, "put the fear of God into us" as Shipley recalls because the climb then became a case of get off the wall or face the consequences. The pair bivvied on top of Half Dome after topping out.

"I got up in the morning - his hair's all dirty, he hasn't showered in a week, and his bags all covered in dirt and sand - and I go 'Man, this is the most classic John Middendorf I've ever seen'." recalls Shipley. "He's not afraid to sleep in the dirt, even without a pad or whatever."

Although the pair have had several falling outs, like a debate on the Kali Yuga over where to place a bolt anchor, "he's actually really easy to get along with." says Shipley. "He can be a little moody sometimes. We've done a lot of good climbing together. A lot. John Middendorf's always has a really strong will to continue with the climb and give it his all."

With a major prize under his belt, Middendorf was back in action.

"Basically, I came out of retirement in five weeks did the Kali Yuga, the Prow in a day, the third ascent of the Sheep Ranch and a new route on Yosemite Falls Wall, Route 66, all in five weeks," Middendorf recalls.

"I felt pretty back into it."

Since 1989, Middendorf's climbing career has been marked by a remarkable alternation between big desert walls and Yosemite's granite cliffs.

In 1990, for example, Middendorf teamed up with American legend Jimmy Dunn and repeated Dunn's 1972 solo route, the "Cosmos," and the pair added a direct finish. It was Dunn's first El Cap climb in nearly two decades.

"I felt really confident up there with John," said Dunn. "It was great knowing he was with me."

Then, also that year, Middendorf and Shipley also climbed a grade VI route on the Abraham, one of the bigger features in Zion National Park.

And while he can freeclimb at top standards, Middendorf spends only a small amount of his time on that side of the sport.

"He's actually a pretty good freeclimber," says Bridwell. He's sort of uncanny. You don't think he's going to be a good freeclimber, but he's pretty damn good. He's a really generous person. Real honest. The thing I like about him the most - and I don't give a damn about how he climbs - is he's a really nice person."

Bridwell's comments point to something perhaps even more legendary than Middendorf's ability to beak it out on desperate A5 horror shows: his personality.

"Has anyone told you John's a really generous guy?" asks Shipley. As a matter of fact, nearly every climber's first comments for this article about John William Middendorf IV are on his generosity.

"He's really generous. God bless, John," says longtime friend Steve Bosque.

"He's one guy who really deserves it."

BOLTS, HEADS AND HOLES

In 1992, Great Trango highlighted a career that just keeps going up. While his ascent with Bongard could easily justify the conclusion of an outrageous life in the mountains, Middendorf sees it as a step towards other extreme walls.

"Sometimes in the valley it was hard to tell there was a higher standard to achieve, because it's so easy just hanging out doing climbs that are below your limit, but I like think there are higher accomplishments to be had," says Middendorf.

While he does give a tip of his hat in respect to climbers like Steve Gerberding, Scott Stowe and Dave Bengston, who are breaking speed records left and right on El Cap's hardest nailing routes, Middendorf does not believe the future of wall climbing lies in Yosemite, at least not for him.

"That technique, climbing fast, only applies in places like Yosemite, where you've got a lot of fixed gear and fixed anchors," he says. "To do the really big wall challenges elsewhere, like in Patagonia, Baffin Island and Pakistan, it helps to be able to climb 18-20 hours at a time," Middendorf agrees, "but the technique of using fixed gear doesn't apply. It's obviously too dangerous a tactic to use on a first ascent."

Also, on Great Trango, Middendorf and Bongard climbed "capsule" style, in which they fixed only ropes above each hanging camp. They were committed to the wall from day 1.

"That's what I've always been training for, routes like that in the big mountains," he said. "It's like Chouinard said: taking the tactics used in Yosemite elsewhere, which really hasn't been done too much."

While Middendorf has mixed views on retrobolting of established wall routes,

he adamantly opposes sieging, extensive artificial aid placements and similar tactics, shas well as the use of power drills.

"The Nose has been rap-bolted now, from the top by Brooke Sandahl, but that doesn't seem to bother me too much," he said. "There's other places, like the first pitches of New Jersey Turnpike, which were like A4, serious. Dave Schultz was trying to free them so he's put a lot of bolts in and has taken a lot of the excitement out of those. I draw the line somewhere, like on the "Sea of Dreams." Some people went up and bolted every belay. When Bridwell put that up, he was trying to make not only the pitches difficult but the belays as well. They were technically difficult to set up. I think it's bad to go up there and wham in a couple of bolts. It's like Bonatti said, 'bolts are the murder of the impossible'."

Bolts added to the Kali Yuga by Bill Russel and Pete Takeda during the first ascent of their new route, the "Vodka Putsch," which joins the last leads of Kali Yuga, upset Middendorf.

"They added over 25 holes," says an offended Middendorf. "They bolted around this flake that Walt freeclimbed, but the worst tragedy of that route is that the last pitch - which Walt led - went completely no holes, and it overhung probably 50 feet in 75 feet of climbing. It was sketchy A3 pins in these horizontal layers. It was really strenuous and really awkward. It was a masterpiece. They shouldn't have been on it. They should have done some other variation where they could've drilled their way up."

Chiseled head placements are the other major Yosemite trend, that Middendorf doesn't like. While he admits, his new route "Flight of the Albatross" on El Capitan, has about a half dozen chiseled head placements, it's a technique Middendorf has used only twice, only in recent years, and doesn't endorse.

"I could see where it's applicable sometimes," he says. "But generally I won't. The reason I have a problem with them is that they are easiest for the first ascent team. And then it gets trashed for subsequent ascents."

"I think it's a bogus technique to use, generally," he says. "Manufactured difficult aid climbing is just bullshit. Obviously, you can take any section of blank rock and chisel head and hook placements and make it as hard as you want, and that's not the name of the game. The name of the game is to find the natural A5 climbing without altering the rock."

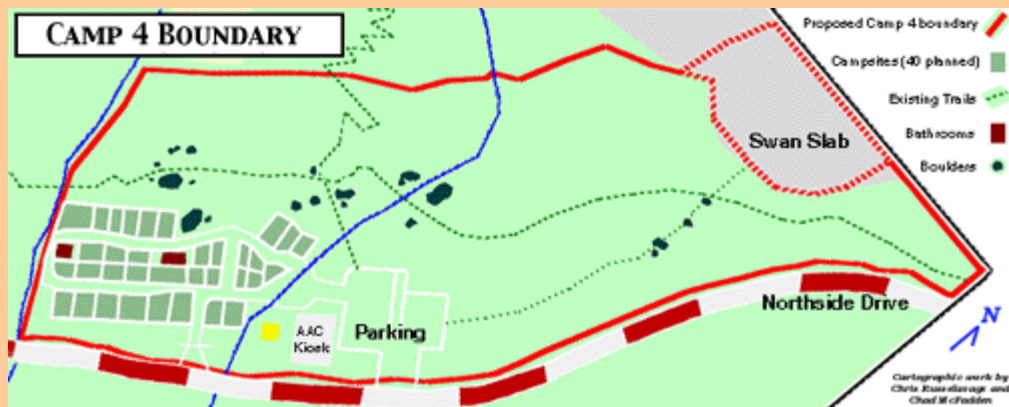
"I think that's what all climbing's all about, seeking natural lines," he says. Certainly, with Great Trango, Middendorf and Bongard joined the ranks of the world's best climbers focused on natural lines on big cliffs. That route, incidentally, averages less drilled holes per foot than most "natural lines" - including some of Royal Robbins' routes - in Yosemite.

"Great, really good achievement," adds Bridwell of the Grand Voyage, on Great Trango. "One of the best achievements in the last decade. It's an achievement that ranks up there with the South Face of Cerro Torre. And the style was certainly impeccable."

"He's really gone a long way," says Shipley. "Especially with that Trango Tower route. He's really accelerated out of the norm."

[RETURN TO Bigwalls.net](http://Bigwalls.net)

Camp 4 Yosemite Web Site



The original documents that helped preserved an international climber's basecamp in Yosemite.

Activism to preserve Camp 4 was initiated by a group of climbers and conservationists in response to a 1997 plan to expand the Yosemite Lodge commercial lodging into the Swan Slabs woodland, and to build an expansive housing complex for nearly half the Valley's commercial workforce on the very edge of Camp 4. The Swan Slabs woodland is a peaceful, sunny place to walk, picnic, and boulder, just next to Camp 4. Camp 4 is the historic basecamp of generations of Valley climbers.

Legal actions:

[Camp 4: National Historic Register Supplementary Application, by Dick Duane](#)

[The lawsuit that helped the NPS reconsider the development around Camp 4](#)

Background

[The AAC Resolutions that started the legal aspects.](#)

[Yosemite's dwindling campsites \(notes from a longtime ranger Ron Mackie\)](#)

[Map of the previously proposed development in the Lodge area](#)

[Field Research on the Valley Hotels, by John Middendorf \(posted on rec.climbing\)](#)

[Hotels or Campsites 5/97, by John Middendorf](#)

[Hotels or Campsites PDF version\(as distributed in Yosemite\)](#)

[Yosemite Crisis Update 3/98, by John Middendorf](#)

Responses to Original Yosemite Lodge Plan

[Panel discussion, "The Future of our National Parks and Public Lands", 1997 AAC meeting, John Middendorf](#)

[Yosemite Access Article \(published in Climbing 5/98\)](#)

[Friends of Yosemite Valley's Comments to the VIP](#)

[Letter from concerned Japanese climber](#)

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[Big Wall Climbing Home Page](#)



[**Camp4Yosemite Webmaster**](#) (John Middendorf)

Below are the minutes from several AAC Board Meetings that initiated the historical lawsuit that saved Camp 4. It was the first time that the AAC opposed the actions of the National Park Service, and the resolutions were controversial. It was only through persistence that I was able to bring the serious implications of the Park Service plan to light with the AAC board. The long term effect of our opposition has been a tremendous

DRAFT MINUTES (Exerpt)
American Alpine Club
Board of Directors Meeting
Golden, CO
September 13, 1997

Present:

Officers:

Louis Reichardt, President, Michael Browning, Vice President,
Sam Streibert, Treasurer, Jed Williamson, Secretary

Board Members:

William L. Putnam, Carlos Buhler, Jim Frush, Eliza Moran, Bill Stall,
John Rehmer, John Middendorf, Ralph Erenzo

Reichardt commented on the Yosemite project and the Yosemite Fund, which is a 3-year, million dollar plus project. He asked the Board to consider our level of involvement. Middendorf finds the proposal to be a travesty as presented, citing the tree cutting plan and the walk in proposal. His perspective comes from four years of living there, and 20 years total experience. He feels that Yosemite will be out of the question for anyone who wants to do extensive climbing there. Buhler indicated that he believes our handling of this as a Board will have international ramifications. Several discussion points followed, and the question was raised as to what kind of participation we should engage in. Reichardt believes that if we are association with the renovation then we might have a say in how it is developed. We have a better chance of shaping the results, and it will be perceived as AAC having attempted to work towards the benefit of climbers and the climbing environment. Williamson asked whether being in the process would be of benefit, even if we "lose" in terms of suggestions and plans. One method of involvement is to be opposed to certain aspects of the plan and go on record. Therefore, it was MOVED by John Middendorf that the AAC Board is opposed to the current aspect of the plan that calls for cutting trees in the vicinity of Yosemite Lodge north of Northside Drive from Columbia to Swan Slab. Carried.

After long discussions with the board over the next months, I insisted on a special meeting after the December Board meeting and the following resloutions were passed.

The Board of Directors readjourned at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 6, 1997.
John Middendorf made the following motion:

1. It is the sense of the Board of Directors of the American Alpine Club that we believe that the current Yosemite Lodge Development Plan violates the policy of the American Alpine Club which believes that the National Parks are to be set aside in their natural condition.
2. The American Alpine Club feels that walk-in campgrounds are more in line with appropriate policy than the planned

development, and the American Alpine Club objects to the current plan to develop buildings, cut trees, and build parking lots in areas, including but not limited to, north of Northside Drive from Camp 4 (Sunnyside Campground) to Swan Slab; further that, the American Alpine Club believes that Camp 4 (also known as Sunnyside Campground) is a unique and historically significant place.

3. The American Alpine Club supports this listing in the National Register of Historic Places; further the American Alpine Club believes that since mountaineers are the primary users of Camp 4, the American Alpine Club should continue to have a strong voice and interest in all continuing issues, including authorizations for facilities, campground reservations systems, and other matters pertaining to Camp 4.

bigwalls.net

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA- SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION

FRIENDS OF YOSEMITE VALLEY, GREG ADAIR, PAT AMENT, JOHN BACHAR, FRED BECKEY, ERIC BRAND, JIM BRIDWELL, DAVID BROWER, R.D. CAUGHNOR, PETER CROFT, YVON CHOUINARD, ROGER DERRYBERRY, HANS FLORINE, TOM FROST, WARREN HARDING, SIBYLLE HECHTEL, TM HERBERT, LYNN HILL, CHRIS JONES, PETER MAYFIELD, JOHN MIDDENDORF, CHUCK PRATT, ROYAL ROBBINS, GALEN ROWELL, KIM SCHMITZ, STEVE SCHNEIDER, ALLEN STECK BROCK WAGSTAFF, THE AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB, THE ACCESS FUND and THE CRAGMONT CLIMBING CLUB)	Case No.
Plaintiffs,)	<u>COMPLAINT</u>
v.)	(Violations of the National Environmental Policy Act and National Park Service Organic Act)
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, DEPARTMENT OF THE)	<u>FOR DECLARATORY AND EQUITABLE RELIEF AND ATTORNEYS FEES</u>

INTERIOR, NATIONAL PARK
SERVICE, BRUCE BABBITT, in)
his capacity as the SECRETARY OF)
THE INTERIOR, ROBERT)
STANTON, in his capacity as the)
DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL)
PARK SERVICE, JOHN)
REYNOLDS, in his capacity as)
WESTERN REGIONAL)
DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL)
PARK SERVICE, STANLEY)
ALBRIGHT, in his capacity as the)
SUPERINTENDENT OF)
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK,)
and DOES 1 - 100, Defendants.)
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INTRODUCTION

Yosemite Valley ("the Valley") is one of the first two natural areas in the United States set aside for public benefit and appreciation. The Valley, itself unique, contains El Capitan, Half Dome and Mount Watkins-- three of the world's largest exposed granite monoliths. Overnight visitors have the choice of non-camping facilities that range from tent-cabins (\$40.00 plus per night) to motel/hotel lodging (\$70.00 to \$229.00 per night). There are five camping facilities: drive-in campgrounds (sleeping in or next to one's car) available for \$15.00 per night on a "reservation only" basis. However, visitors from foreign countries or on indefinite schedules find making reservations difficult, and the young or others with limited budgets cannot afford the camping fees. Many want a better wilderness experience than sleeping in or next to their car. One Valley campground-- Camp 4 (Sunnyside)-- is available to campers on a "first come, first served" basis for \$3.00 a night. Campers leave their cars behind and walk to a campsite. These features are particularly attractive to the young, giving Camp 4 the feel of an international youth hostel.

The stewardship of the resources of Yosemite National Park presents the National Park Service with a unique assignment because the Valley is the premier rockclimbing center in the world. The area between the Camp 4 campsites and a series of low-lying cliffs to the east ("Swan Slab") (from the northern rim of the Valley to a road called Northside Drive) has developed through usage and history into a climbing reserve of national and international significance (see aerial photograph, Exhibit "A"). This will be referred to as "the climbers' reserve," "the reserve" or "Camp 4/Swan Slab." The campground in the reserve has served as the base camp and meeting place for those participating in many of the greatest ascents in the history of American climbing. The boulders found in the campground and in the open space immediately to the east of the campground ("Swan Slab Meadow") have been used by generations of climbers as both practice sites and climbing destinations. Some of the boulders are famous internationally and draw climbers from throughout the world. The cliffs to the east of Swan Slab Meadow ("Swan Slab") are one of the few beginning practice areas available to climbers and have been used by the Yosemite School of Mountaineering as a teaching resource for years.

The historic climbers' reserve contains one of the few campsites in the world that is, in and of itself, a travel destination. Climbers come to meet old friends, find climbing partners, practice bouldering, share in the climbing atmosphere and cultural diversity of the area, or just to camp or prepare for climbs in other parts of the Valley. Here young Americans meet and form friendships with their compatriots from dozens of countries.

A road called Northside Drive runs in an east-west direction near the northern rim of the Valley. The climbers' reserve is north of the road. South of the road, and slightly to the east of Camp 4/Swan Slab, lies the Yosemite Lodge complex.

The barrier of the road and sufficient distance from the climbers' reserve has prevented the Yosemite Lodge complex from having any significant impact on the quality of the experiences of those using the climbers' reserve.

However, in an April 1997 planning document Defendants announced their intention to move Northside Drive and to build a series of large dormitories in the midst of the reserve, adjacent to Camp 4, for 336 concessionaire employees. These dorms would occupy a space equal to one and one-quarter football fields. Each dormitory would be three stories high (36 to 44 feet). Supporting facilities would take up an additional area the width of a football field. A paved parking lot for the dormitory employees would be the length of two and one-half football fields.

Further, in the undeveloped Swan Slab area immediately east of Camp 4, the Park Service now plans a housing development for Park visitors. Twelve fourplexes, each with the footprint of a home (1600 square feet plus porches) will be constructed in this internationally renown tranquil area to provide lodging for 48 separate visitor groups, up to 190 people.

The impact on the climbers' reserve of the lodging and/or dormitory construction will be devastating. Noise and crowding will replace the pleasure of being in Swan Slab Meadow as some 190-plus visitors rotate through the fourplexes. Campers used to the solitude and climbing pleasures in the meadow will find themselves interlopers in the backyard of the fourplex dwellers. Swan Slab cliff users will lose any sense of serenity or privacy as they learn or practice climbing skills. The tranquil open area in the midst of the climbers' reserve will have its atmosphere altered from pastoral to suburban. The height, proximity and density of the dormitories will end the sense of spaciousness around the campsite. Vistas will be lost. The further crowding created by the presence of some 336 employees will overwhelm this small climbers' reserve.

The plaintiffs objected strenuously, through counsel and personally, to both the employee housing and visitor lodging construction plans in the Camp 4/Swan Slab area in a series of meetings with Defendants' representatives. After the meetings Defendants indicated that the visitor lodging would go forward as planned. However, the plaintiffs are informed and believe that dormitory construction decisions could be delayed. An announcement of any delay has not yet occurred.

Defendants have made clear that visitor lodging construction (which is going forward) will not be preceded by an Environmental Impact Statement or the consideration of any alternatives less destructive to the climbers' reserve.

Plaintiffs are informed and believe that any delay in the announcement of the employee dormitory decisions will not result in: the issuance of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement; a hard look at the environmental impact of the construction; or the review of numerous alternatives that should have been considered prior to the finalizing of any decision relating to the dormitories. They are informed and believe, and based on that information and belief assert that the choice of site locations for the dormitories or the plans for the construction of the dormitories will not be substantially altered by a delay in the decision should such a delay occur. Rather, the delay of the decision will result in the fragmentation of the planning process and only the appearance of diluting the cumulative impact of Defendants' plans on the climbers' reserve.

Each plaintiff in this case has a long history of climbing in Yosemite Valley. Together they challenge and seek a reconsideration of Defendants' plans for the Camp 4/Swan Slab reserve. Many plaintiffs have spent months, even years, using the cultural, recreational and historical resources of the climbers' reserve. Some first came with their parents as children. Some returned as parents with their children. They bring this action, not only on behalf of climbers, but on behalf of all visitors, young and old, climbers and non-climbers, who have and will use the unique, inexpensive facilities of Camp 4/Swan Slab.

Defendants will proceed with the construction of the lodging in the midst of the climbers' reserve without having prepared an Environmental Impact Statement, and without having considered any far less invasive alternatives. The lodging construction for these upscale facilities is proposed at the very time that the demand for less expensive overnight campsites is rapidly increasing. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and, based on that information and belief, allege that the decision-making process with regard to the employee dormitory construction will proceed without either the preparation of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement or the consideration of alternative sites or solutions. Defendants' planning process ignores the procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and the

substantive requirements of the National Park Service Organic Act. In doing so they fail to carry out their mandate to preserve the "...resources that contribute to Yosemite's uniqueness..." and to protect its " historic... cultural resources" [Emphasis added] (see Draft Yosemite Lodge Area Concept Plan Environmental Assessment at 1, citing the Congressional enabling legislation of 1890).

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JURISDICTION

1. This complaint arises under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended ("NEPA"), 42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq., and its implementing regulations, adopted by the Council on Environmental Quality ("CEQ") and applicable to all agencies, 40 C.F.R. Pts. 1500-1508. Judicial review is sought pursuant to Section 10 of the Administrative Procedure Act ("APA"), 5 U.S.C. § 701 et seq., authorizing judicial review of all governmental agency actions. This court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1311 and 1316, and may grant declaratory relief and further relief pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201 and 2202.

VENUE

2. Venue lies in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e) and 42 U.S.C. § 390 since plaintiffs David Brower, Hans Florine, Peter Mayfield, Galen Rowell, Brock Wagstaff, Greg Adair, Alan Steck, Steve Schneider and R.D. Caughron are residents of this district, and the defendants who are officers or employees of the United States, acting in their official capacities, have an office in the district (San Francisco) that carries out functions relating to the Yosemite National Park planning process that is the subject matter of this lawsuit.

PARTIES

3. Brief descriptions of the plaintiffs are as follows:

a. Plaintiff FRIENDS OF YOSEMITE VALLEY is an unincorporated association founded by Greg Adair, John Middendorf and Tom Frost. It was formed by them in direct response to threats to Camp 4/Swan Slab ("the climbers' reserve") arising out of the planning process relating to development of Yosemite National Park. Its specific purpose is the protection of the climbing heritage and the natural environment of Yosemite Valley on behalf of past, present and future climbers, and on behalf of the public generally. Each of the co-founders of plaintiff Friends of Yosemite Valley has personally objected to the construction plans of Defendants complained of herein and has requested that Defendants consider alternatives to those plans. Each co-founder has made specific use of Camp 4/Swan Slab. Each has definite plans to use the reserve in the future, including after the commencement of the construction and development complained of herein.

b. Plaintiff DAVID BROWER resides in Berkeley, California. His first visit to Yosemite Valley was with his parents in 1918. His initial first ascent in the Valley was of the Panorama Cliff in 1937. He subsequently made 18 additional first ascents in the Valley. He served with the United States Army, Tenth Mountain Division, from 1942 through 1946 and taught thousands of troops climbing and mountaineering techniques. Plaintiff Brower was the Executive Director of the Sierra Club from 1952 to 1969 and has served as a Board member of the Sierra Club for 17 years. He is currently a member of the Sierra Club Board of Directors and the Board of Directors of the Yosemite Concessionaire Services, which provides concessionaire services to visitors in Yosemite Valley. Mr. Brower is an honorary member of the American Alpine Club, which has established the David Brower Conservation Award, given annually to persons who have made important contributions to the protection of mountain environments. Mr. Brower has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times.

c. Plaintiff ALLEN STECK is a resident of Berkeley, California. During the early 1950s he established long climbing routes in Yosemite Valley, including a route on Sentinel Rock with climber John Salathe that expanded the vision of what is possible and helped pave the way for the revolutionary age of climbing in the 1950s and early 1960s. He is the co-author of the book The Fifty Classic Climbs of North America (Sierra Club Books, 1979) and is an editor of the

publication Ascent (Sierra Club Books). Mr. Steck is an honorary member of the American Alpine Club (1996).

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d. During the period loosely described as the late 1950s and early 1960s plaintiffs WARREN HARDING, ROYAL ROBBINS, TOM FROST, YVON CHOUINARD, CHUCK PRATT and TM HERBERT came to the Valley and established routes that revolutionized the concept of big wall climbing and placed the Valley on the international stage for climbers throughout the world. Among those climbs (sometimes with others who are not plaintiffs) were: the first successful ascent of the northwest face of Half Dome (by plaintiff Robbins); the first ascent of El Capitan (by plaintiff Harding), the first successful continuous ascent of El Capitan (by plaintiffs Frost, Pratt and Robbins); the first ascent of the Salathe Wall on El Capitan (by plaintiffs Frost, Pratt and Robbins); the first ascent of the North American Wall (by plaintiffs Robbins, Frost, Pratt and Chouinard); and the first ascent of the Muir Wall (by plaintiffs Chouinard and Herbert). One of the boulder climbs in this reserve is named after plaintiff Pratt. Plaintiff Robbins is largely credited with establishing the standards, ethics and techniques now adopted by big wall climbers throughout the world. Plaintiffs Chouinard and Frost conceived and designed much of the equipment that made the big wall climbs feasible and they subsequently entered into a business producing that equipment. Plaintiffs Yvon Chouinard and Royal Robbins are honorary members of the American Alpine Club. Plaintiff Chouinard is also a recipient of the American Alpine Club Underhill Award for outstanding mountaineering achievement. Said award is given annually to those persons demonstrating the highest level of skill in the mountaineering arts and who, through application of their skill, courage and perseverance, have achieved outstanding success in the various fields of mountaineering.

During this period of climbing history, plaintiffs PAT AMENT and ROGER DERRYBERRY also participated in these climbing efforts.

During the era of these great ascents, the plaintiffs frequently stayed at Camp 4 while they planned and prepared for their climbs. Plaintiff Herbert returned years after his historic climbs to use the Swan Slab cliffs to teach his children climbing skills. His son Tom is now one of America's great climbers. Plaintiff Tom Frost returned to the Valley in 1997 and camped in the Camp 4/Swan Slab reserve for a period of more than two months while he and his son repeated many of the climbs previously described. While there he learned of Defendants' development plans for the climbers' reserve and engaged Park officials in informal discussions in an effort to try to convince them to either consider other options or to stop the development altogether.

Plaintiffs Frost and Ament have also compiled a history of Camp 4 and climbing in the Valley, and have submitted a request that Camp 4 be placed in the National Historical Register. Plaintiff Tom Frost has plans to use the climbers' reserve with his son this year and next year. Plaintiff Pratt last stayed in Camp 4/Swan Slab two years ago and will return within the next year to stay again. Should the development by the defendants go forward, plaintiffs Frost and Pratt will be directly and negatively affected in a significant and irreparable way.

e. Plaintiff GALEN ROWELL resides in Berkeley, California. He first started going to Yosemite Valley with his parents in 1943. He completed his first climb in the Valley in 1957. Among his climbs were an early ascent of the northwest face of Half Dome in 1962 and the first ascent of the south face of Half Dome. He has approximately 25 first ascents to his credit.

His experiences hiking and climbing in Yosemite National Park and the Sierra Nevada led to his career as a professional photographer. Plaintiff Galen Rowell is a winner of the Ansel Adams award for photography and is the former photographer laureate for Yosemite Valley. He edited the book, The Vertical World of Yosemite (Wilderness Press, 1974), a collection of writings and photographs on rockclimbing in Yosemite, and published his own book (The Yosemite, Sierra Club Books, 1989) combining his photographs of Yosemite National Park with the writings of John Muir. He is a member of the boards of directors of the Yosemite Fund, Yosemite National Institute and the American Land Conservancy and has lectured throughout the country on various environmental issues. He camps at and/or visits Camp 4/Swan Slab almost every year and will be socializing, camping and/or bouldering within the climbers' reserve

almost every year into the foreseeable future. He will, therefore, be directly and negatively impacted by these development plans in a significant and irreparable way.

f. Plaintiffs JIM BRIDWELL and KIM SCHMITZ both climbed in Yosemite beginning in the 1960s and 1970s and spent extensive periods of time in Yosemite Valley. They are credited with advancing the techniques and speed with which big wall climbs in the Valley were accomplished. Plaintiff Bridwell has over 200 first ascents to his name, including six on El Capitan, four on Half Dome and one on Mount Watkins. He also was the founder of the Search and Rescue (SAR) team that is responsible for saving the lives of numerous Valley visitors. He camped extensively in Camp 4 for approximately 17 years. Plaintiff Bridwell returns to Yosemite Valley approximately once or twice each year and will do so for the foreseeable future. When he returns to the Valley he goes to Camp 4/Swan Slab for the purpose of meeting old friends and connecting up to the ongoing climbing culture. Those climbing with him will frequently be staying at Camp 4/Swan Slab. If the plans of the defendants are allowed to go forward he will be negatively affected in a significant and irreparable way.

g. Plaintiffs JOHN BACHAR and PETER CROFT both camped and climbed in Yosemite Valley, along with others, and are credited with greatly advancing the technical skills brought to "free climbing." (Free climbing is climbing that uses such aid as slings, ropes and other equipment only to catch falls rather than to assist in ascending a climb.) Their solos ascents, difficult routes and speed climbs are of historic significance. Both Mr. Bachar and Mr. Croft are recipients of the American Alpine Club Underhill Award.

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While completing these great climbs, both spent significant time in the Camp 4/Swan Slab area. Plaintiff Bachar first learned of climbing as a child when he saw beginners practicing in Swan Slab. He spent most springs, summers and autumns in the Camp 4/Swan Slab reserve for a period of eight years. Plaintiff Croft returns to Yosemite Valley each year and will do so in the future. Both Plaintiffs have made extensive use of the boulders in this area. When plaintiff Croft visits the Valley he goes to the climbers' reserve to camp, socialize or to climb on the numerous boulders. He intends to return to Camp 4/Swan Slab for these purposes after the commencement or completion of the development plans of the defendants complained of herein. He will be negatively affected by those plans in a significant and irreparable way.

h. Plaintiff LYNN HILL first came to Yosemite Valley with her parents in 1974 at the age of 13, returning to climb in 1975. During the period of 1976 to 1978 she spent most of the summers climbing in the Valley and camped frequently at Camp 4. She was a member of the Search and Rescue team. In 1993 she astonished the climbing world by doing the first "free ascent" of The Nose route on El Capitan. She is the recipient of the Underhill Award and is presently the only female honorary lifetime member of the American Alpine Club. She was climbing in the Valley on El Capitan in April/May of 1998 and just completed the first female ascent of a Camp 4 boulder route called "Midnight Lightning." The route is on Columbia boulder, an internationally famous boulder within the climbers' reserve. She planned to establish a new route on El Capitan but was thwarted by foul weather. She will return when weather and time permit to complete that plan. During her return trip she will visit and/or use Camp 4/Swan Slab and will be significantly and negatively affected if Defendants' construction plans proceed. ??i. Plaintiff BROCK WAGSTAFF is an architect who works and resides in Marin County, California. He became deeply involved in climbing in 1970 and has been visiting Yosemite Valley ever since. He has spent numerous days camping in and/or visiting Camp 4 and using the Swan Slab area. He has, among his Yosemite ascents, routes on Washington Column, the Lost Arrow, El Capitan, Mount Watkins, Half Dome and the Leaning Tower. He was a member of the American Alpine Club Board of Directors from 1981 to 1987.

Plaintiff Wagstaff submitted formal, written commentary during the comment period opposing the development plans complained of herein and made specific proposals. Among other things he proposed that the "overall site plan" for the construction be reassessed with a view to tightening up the building relationships.

Plaintiff Brock Wagstaff has a specific plan to return to the Camp 4/Swan Slab areas in the spring of 1998 and autumn 1998. It is his plan to camp there and to prepare for climbs on El Capitan and on Half Dome. He intends to return to the climbers' reserve every year thereafter for the immediate future. He will return to Camp 4/Swan Slab after the development complained of. As such, he will be negatively affected in a significant and irreparable way.

j. Plaintiff GREG ADAIR is a resident of San Francisco and a graduate of environmental design from the University of California, Berkeley. He first visited Yosemite Valley with his fourth grade class in 1970. His interest in the outdoors led him to climbing. In the last three years he has stayed at Camp 4 approximately six times and engaged in numerous climbing trips in Yosemite National Park, including the Valley. He has discussed with the Park Service, both formally and informally, his objections to the plan to place housing and/or lodging in Camp 4/Swan Slab. Plaintiff Adair is a member of the American Alpine Club and a co-founder of Friends of Yosemite Valley. He has specific plans to return to the climbers' reserve this summer and/or autumn while he prepares for climbs on Washington Column and El Capitan. He intends to return to the Valley and the climbers' reserve during each climbing season every year for the foreseeable future. As such, he will be negatively affected in a significant way and will suffer irreparable harm.

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k. Plaintiff SIBYLLE HECHTEL resides in Boulder, Colorado. She first stayed in Camp 4 in 1960 at age 10 with her father, mother and grandmother while her father climbed. Her life has been completely affected by her experiences in the Valley. She stayed at Camp 4/Swan Slab for at least a portion of 1971, 1972, 1973 and 1978. She was a member of the Search and Rescue team that helped save climbers, hikers and campers who got into trouble in the Valley. She also made the first all-female ascent of the south face of the Washington Column. She is a life member of the American Alpine Club. She has also climbed in Canada, Mexico, the Soviet Union and Tibet. Plaintiff Hechtel was most recently employed on the Search and Rescue Team during the summer of 1996 and part of autumn 1996. She last lived in the climbers' reserve in June and October of 1997. She has applied for and expects to receive the job with SAR for 1998 and to live in Camp 4/Swan Slab. She plans to return to work in the Yosemite Valley and to live in the climbers' reserve for a portion of each summer for the immediate future, including the years 1999 and 2000.

l. Plaintiff ERIC BRAND first went to Yosemite in 1960 at about the age of six. He began climbing in the valley in 1977. In 1980 he made his first multi-day climb, completing a winter ascent of the west face of the Leaning Tower. He has two first ascents on routes on El Capitan. He took the climbing techniques used in Yosemite Valley to Baffin Island where he completed a 33-day ascent of Mount Thor. He was Chairman of the Sierra Nevada Section of the American Alpine Club from 1995 through January 1998.

m. Plaintiff CHRIS JONES resides in Marin County, California. He was born in Great Britain and came to Yosemite Valley in 1965 because of his interest in the mountains. He climbed in the Valley regularly from the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s, each year spending from one to three months in the climbers' reserve. His book, Climbing in North America, published by the University of California Press (1976), records much of the history of climbing in Yosemite Valley and gives a short synopsis of Camp 4's role in that climbing history.

n. Plaintiff JOHN MIDDENDORF is a graduate of Stanford University, a resident of San Francisco and a designer for The North Face, a recreational clothing and equipment company. During his 20-year climbing career he has spent approximately 2,000 nights camping in the Valley, including within the climbers' reserve. He has made 30 ascents of El Capitan and is a board member of the American Alpine Club. In 1996 he founded, along with plaintiffs Greg Adair and Tom Frost, an organization called "Friends of Yosemite Valley." He has been engaged since 1996 in educating the climbing community and others about the impact of the National Park Service's development plans on Yosemite Valley. He last visited the Valley and the climbers' reserve in May of 1998 and plans to return to Camp 4/Swan Slab every year into the foreseeable future. As such, he will be negatively affected in a significant way and will suffer irreparable harm.

o. Plaintiffs HANS FLORINE and PETER MAYFIELD both lived in Yosemite Valley, including the climbers' reserve, for extensive periods of time and established, individually or with others, some of the more difficult climbs in the Valley. Hans Florine's speed ascents of El Capitan and other great walls brought international recognition to himself and to the climbing possibilities in Yosemite Valley. Peter Mayfield established one of the most difficult climbs on the northwest face of Half Dome. He was also the Chief Guide for the Yosemite School for Mountaineering. He is a

certified guide and a key person responsible for establishing the indoor climbing industry. Through these indoor climbs, persons interested in climbing can learn and practice their skills in urban locations during the off-climbing season. Both Hans Florine and Peter Mayfield have climbed throughout the United States and foreign countries, including Argentina. Plaintiffs Mayfield and Florine return to the Valley to visit or boulder at Camp 4/Swan Slab on a regular basis. As such, they will be significantly and negatively affected and will suffer irreparable harm.

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p. Plaintiff STEVE SCHNEIDER is a resident of Oakland, California. He first went to Yosemite Valley at the age of one and has been to the Valley every year since 1961. He completed his first climb in the Valley with his father and brother at the age of eleven in 1971. He lived in Camp 4 in the summers of 1978 through 1981. He was an employee of the Search and Rescue Team (SAR) in 1982 and lived in the climbers' reserve during that employment. He has been back to Camp 4/Swan Slab at least once a year almost every year from 1982 to the present date. He is credited with approximately fifteen first ascents in Yosemite Valley, including two routes on El Capitan. He earns a part of his living as a mountain guide. He plans to return to El Capitan and to the climbers' reserve for every year of his life until his health or other unforeseen circumstances prevent it. Thus, he will be significantly and negatively affected by Defendants' plans and suffer irreparable harm.

q. Plaintiff R.D. CAUGHRON resides in Berkeley, California. He first spent time living in the climbers' reserve during the spring and autumn seasons of 1973 while he was climbing in the Valley. He estimates that he has spent over 365 days in Yosemite Valley since 1971. His last visit to Yosemite Valley to climb was late in the summer of 1997. He expects to return there on a regular basis. The skills that he learned there helped him in subsequent climbs in Pakistan, Nepal, China, the Soviet Union, Canada and in other parts of the United States. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the American Alpine Club from 1979 to 1981. He has visited or stayed in the climbers' reserve on a regular basis and will continue to do so for years to come. He will be negatively affected in a significant way by Defendants' plans and will suffer irreparable harm.

r. Plaintiff FRED BECKEY is considered by most American climbers to have more first ascents in North America to his credit than any other climber. He is the author of three guidebooks and a personal memoir of his climbs.

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s. Plaintiff THE AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB is the leading national organization in the United States devoted to mountaineering, rockclimbing and a multitude of issues facing climbers today. Founded in 1902, it is an IRC § 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation incorporated in Pennsylvania and is headquartered in Golden, Colorado. Among other things, The American Alpine Club is dedicated by its Bylaws to "the conservation and preservation of the mountain environment... and the representation of the interests and concerns of the American climbing community." Individual plaintiffs Greg Adair, Fred Beckey, Eric Brand, David Brower, R.D. Coughran, Tom Frost, Sibylle Hechtel, Lynn Hill, Chris Jones, John Middendorf, Royal Robbins, Galen Rowell, Steve Schneider, Alan Steck and Brock Wagstaff are all members of the American Alpine Club. The Sierra Nevada section of this national organization has over 400 members. Members of the organization have made extensive use of the climbers' reserve. Many members will use this reserve in the future, including after the completion of the development plans objected to in this complaint. Should the plans of defendant National Park Service go forward, those members will be directly and negatively affected in a significant and irreparable way.

The American Alpine Club submitted a written objection to the National Park Service's plans for the area within this reserve during the comment period established by the National Park Service. It asked defendants to consider a number of alternatives, including a suggestion of further planning and further architectural design, and a reconsideration of the proposed introduction of buildings into currently undeveloped areas north and to the east of the Yosemite Lodge. It offered voluntary architectural assistance from its members.

t. Plaintiff THE ACCESS FUND is a IRC § 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation organized in Illinois. It is a conservation and advocacy organization representing the interests of over 500,000 rock and mountain climbers throughout the United States. The Access Fund's mission is to preserve the climbing environment and maintain climbers' access to climbing resources. To accomplish this mission The Access Fund, among other things, participates in the development of land

management plans affecting climbing, and contributes to the formulation of policies concerning climbing by federal and state land management agencies. It has approximately 8,000 members nationwide and currently has about 1,453 members in California, some of whom reside within the Northern District. Access Fund members have used Camp 4/Swan Slab while climbing in Yosemite Valley and will continue to do so.

Because of its concern over the plans of Defendants to develop the areas within this climbers' reserve, The Access Fund met with Park planners on five occasions, and submitted written objections and proposals to National Park Service during the comment process. It objected to any new development north of Northside Drive. It asked Defendants to rethink their priorities and to delay any new development until other critical management issues in Yosemite Park could be addressed, including visitor and employee transportation, and suggested rethinking the reducing the amount of lodging made available for guests.????

u. Plaintiff THE CRAGMONT CLIMBING CLUB is an unincorporated association of climbers located in Northern California. Formed in 1989 when the rockclimbing section of The Sierra Club was discontinued, its principal purpose has been the promotion and organization of climbing activities among its members. The Club objected in writing to the development plans of Defendants' comment period. It specifically opposed the construction of any new buildings closer to the Valley walls than had already occurred and asked the Park to consider other alternatives, such as building employee housing outside of the Valley, or rebuilding employee dormitories in the same locations formerly used.

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Many of the members of the Cragmont Climbing Club have, and will continue to, use Camp 4/Swan Slab. This use will occur even after the development plans of Defendants objected to herein are completed. Members will, therefore, be directly and negatively affected in a significant and irreparable way.

DEFENDANTS

4. Defendant, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, through its agency, the NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, administers Yosemite National Park. The National Park Service, pursuant to Pub.L. No. 95-625 § 604, is devising and implementing a general management plan for the preservation and use of the Park.

5. Defendant BRUCE BABBITT is sued in his official capacity as the Secretary of the Department of the Interior and is responsible for implementation of Pub. L. No. 95-625 § 604, as well as other laws pertaining to Yosemite National Park.

6. Defendant STANLEY ALBRIGHT is sued in his official capacity as Superintendent of Yosemite National Park. Defendant Albright signed the Finding of No Significant Impact with respect to the April 1997 Yosemite National Park Lodge Area Development Concept Plan that is the subject of this action. Defendant ROBERT STANTON is sued in his official capacity as the Director of the National Park Service. He is responsible for overseeing the administration of the national parks, including Yosemite National Park, and for implementing the policies of the National Park Service. Defendant JOHN REYNOLDS is sued in his official capacity as the Western Regional Director of the National Park Service. As such, he is a direct participant in the planning processes for Yosemite National Park that are complained of herein.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

7. The earliest records of those who came to live in or visit Yosemite Valley document the human response to climb there. Seven miles long and a mile wide it contains towering cliffs, domes and spires that rise as high as 3,000 feet. Native Americans told of a legendary descent of one of the prominent features. Joseph Walker, the first European known to have visited the Valley, arrived in 1833 and wrote of some of his failed rockclimbing attempts. John Muir wrote in 1867 of an attempt to climb Half Dome by a man named Bailey (it was first climbed in 1875).

8. The urge to climb in Yosemite Valley blossomed during the Twentieth Century. Ascents of its prominent features-- The Lost Arrow, Cathedral Spires, Half Dome, Sentinel Rock and El Capitan, to name a few-- made the climbs, and those who pioneered them, legendary in the international world of climbing. The Valley is as well-known to the international climbing community as Mount Everest.

9. Central to the American climbing history has been a small campground and climbing practice area known as Camp 4/Swan Slab. Its location, fairly close to El Capitan and along the northern rim of the Park, made it an ideal place for the early and modern day climbers to gather and plan their ascents. It is quiet. When other parts of the Valley are lost in shadow, Camp 4 has light. Large magnificent boulders and low-lying cliffs nearby make it a perfect place to practice or relax before and after climbs. Mixed in with these climbers are visitors not there to climb but to take advantage of Camp 4's beautiful setting and inexpensive facilities.

10. As the great ascents of the Valley occurred and became known, climbers from all over the world gathered there to share in the comradeship, to learn new techniques from each other, and to plan still more ascents.

11. The techniques, strategies and equipment devised around the campfires in Camp 4 soon were adopted in other parts of the world. So famous was the campground that it became a preferred destination for all visiting climbers. CAMP 4: The Recollections of a Yosemite Rockclimber by Steven Roper (The Mountaineers Press 1994) has recorded this history and the significance of Camp 4. A French and Czech edition of it has been published.

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12. So central is Camp 4/Swan Slab to the living history and oral tradition of international climbing that on any given day one is likely to find gathered there American climbers mixing with climbers from Japan, France, Germany, Argentina, Taiwan, Italy, New Zealand, Australia and other countries from around the world.

13. Immediately to the east of Camp 4 is an open space, framed on its northern rim by a stretch of low-lying cliffs (Swan Slab). Many of the magnificent boulders that lie between Camp 4 and Swan Slab are known throughout the national and international climbing communities for the difficult climbing problems they present. The boulders have names-- Columbia, Kor, Titanic, Elegant Gypsy, to name a few-- that are as permanent as the names of the great ascents of the Valley. The Swan Slab cliffs are used by beginning climbers to learn and master the skills they will need on more difficult climbs and by Yosemite Mountaineering School as a classroom.

14. On July 16, 1997 a Finding of No Significant Impact ("FONSI") was signed by Yosemite National Park Superintendent Stanley Albright. The Superintendent approved the Draft Yosemite Lodge Area Development Concept Plan issued in April 1997. As a result of this approval the National Park Service announced its intention to construct four dormitories, each three stories high for 336 employees. Two of the dormitories would be north of Northside Drive, as presently configured.

15. Further, the National Park Service intends to construct in the immediate future, without waiting for any other further planning documents to be issued, twelve fourplexes each with a footprint of 1600 square feet. The purpose of these fourplexes will be to house visitors to the Valley. The fourplexes will be built north of the area known as Northside Drive and in the area within the climber's reserve known as "Swan Slab Meadow." Each of the twelve fourplexes will accommodate 16 visitors for a total of 192 visitors at any one point in time. The presence of the fourplexes in Swan Slab Meadow will alter this presently pastoral meadow/groveland space and convert it to a suburban space for a housing development. The additional 192 visitors will present the climbers who have traditionally used this area with a highly impacted and crowded condition.

16. Although the Yosemite Lodge Area Development Concept Plan has been adopted as a separate and distinct plan, it can be understood only as part of the larger framework of planning for the Park. The General Management Plan ("GMP"), which was published in 1980 pursuant to the National Park Services Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1 et seq., set the goals for future planning in the Valley. All subsequent planning documents should be viewed as an attempt to carry out those goals. One of the strongest goals stated within the GMP was the removal of development in the Valley that

was not compatible with the purposes of the Park. Under the GMP, which has as its principal goal the "reclaiming of the priceless natural beauty of Yosemite" (GMP at 1) it is stated that Yosemite is "...too valuable to use for... parking, or any commercial services that do not contribute directly to a quality park experience" (Id.). A specific stated goal was to "preserve, restore, or protect significant cultural resources (historic and pre-historic)." In carrying out these general goals the Park would "permit only those levels and types of accommodation and services necessary for visitor use and enjoyment of Yosemite" [Emphasis added](GMP at 9). While carrying out these plans the Park would take the steps necessary to "provide the opportunity for a quality wilderness experience."

17. The General Master Plan was specific about the problem of employee housing within the Park. The purposes of the Plan would be carried out by making sure that housing in the Park would be provided only for employees "whose jobs regularly required them to be near their worksite," and for other employees "only when there is no viable alternative for securing housing outside the Park" (GMP at 24). The Plan contemplated keeping housing for no more than 480 employees within the confines of the Valley.

18. The GMP also made it clear that Camp 4 ("Sunnyside") was a recreational resource that would definitely be retained. (GMP at 39)

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19. In 1992 a Concession Services Plan ("CSP"), with an accompanying Environmental Impact Statement, was adopted by Defendants as a supplement to the 1980 General Management Plan and the 1980 Environmental Impact Statement for Yosemite National Park. It specifically decided that various economy cabins without baths would be replaced but they would be replaced with additional economy units with baths. Based on Defendants' understanding at the time of any predictable flood arising from the Merced River, the decision was made that there was enough space in the Yosemite Lodge area to allow the Yosemite Lodge complex to continue as the primary year-round lodge facility in Yosemite Valley (CSP at 9). One hundred seventy-three cabin rooms (without baths) would be replaced with about 60 new economy cabin rooms in duplex or quadraplex structures. The replacement units would "comply with flood guidelines" (CSP at 9). A map attached to the CSP showed that the replacement units all would be placed south of Northside Drive in the general area already developed as part of the large complex. All funding for these concession facilities "generally would not come from funds appropriated by Congress."

20. In 1992 a proposed housing plan for employees was released but none of the proposals were ever acted upon.

21. In December 1996 the Park Service issued a housing plan as an amendment to the proposed 1992 Housing Plan (so-called Proposal "E") and as a Supplement to the 1980 GMP Environmental Impact Statement. It radically altered the GMP goal with regard to employee housing by proposing to build in-Valley housing for 1,016 employees, rather than 480. Proposal E suggested that the Yosemite Lodge dorms would be removed and relocated within a larger complex of dorms "in the same general location" (Draft Addendum Yosemite Valley Housing Plan, Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the General Management Plan, at 15). The dormitories slated for removal were facilities south of Northside Drive and remote from Camp 4/Swan Slab. Proposal E suggested building new dormitories for 344 employees in the same spot as the dormitories that were being replaced. Because of the remoteness of the proposed new dormitories from the climbers' reserve, it was unnecessary to consider alternatives for dormitory site locations in order to avoid negatively impacting Camp 4/Swan Slab. The review and finalization of housing Proposal E has gone on since its issuance without any consideration of any negative impact on the climbers' reserve. The comment period for the proposal was ignored by climbers and climbing organizations because their reserve was not affected by Defendants' plans. The eighteen month review following the comment period is rapidly approaching its end and will be completed in July 1998. Plaintiffs are informed and believe that the final document is already in the drafting stage.

22. In January 1997 a flood occurred in the Valley of such magnitude that it exceeded any floodlines that had been used by Defendants in their planning processes. There are three areas where visitor lodging and employee housing has been concentrated in Yosemite Valley: Curry Village, the Ahwahnee and the Yosemite Lodge complex. Only the Yosemite Lodge area was drastically affected. The flood, according to the National Park Service, damaged fifty percent (50%) of the Yosemite lodging. There is no independent determination of Defendants' damage estimate. The extent of the flood

was an environmental fact not previously understood when Defendants made their decisions about the total amount of lodging that would be available through the concessionaire, where the lodging might be concentrated in the Valley, where the specific lodging rooms might be placed, how much employee housing would be left in the Valley, or where employee housing might be located.

23. In the fall of 1997 the National Park Service was to issue the long-awaited Draft Yosemite Valley Implementation Plan Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (VIP). The purpose of this document was to integrate all of the planning decisions into one final proposal. It would be in this document that decisions relating to employee housing, visitor lodging, traffic patterns, the availability of inexpensive camping facilities, etc. would finally appear as one coherent plan to implement the goals of the 1980 General Management Plan.

24. In April 1997 Defendants issued the Draft Yosemite Lodge Development Concept Plan ("the Lodge Plan"). This plan, which is challenged by Plaintiffs herein, made decisions about lodging in this area before any member of the public could read, consider or comment on the Valley Implementation Plan ("VIP"). The Lodge Plan purports to settle all visitor lodging and employee housing decisions in the Yosemite Lodge complex area, and areas nearby, without waiting for any finalization of the VIP proposals. It is accompanied by an Environmental Assessment (rather than an Environmental Impact Statement).

25. Under the Lodge Plan, five three-story dormitories were to be built immediately adjacent to Camp 4/Swan Slab instead of in the location of the old dormitories as recommended in Proposal E. No consideration was given to any other location in the Valley. No massing studies for the proposal or architectural renderings of any sort were included for review in the Environmental Assessment. No discussion of how the planning might affect the climbers' reserve was included, save to say that Camp 4 was, in the opinion of one reviewer, not eligible for the National Historical Register (an application to have the Camp 4 campsite placed on the National Historical Register is currently pending).

26. The Lodge Plan also proposed, for the first time, that visitor lodging for 190 visitors was to be built north of Northside Drive, immediately to the east of Camp 4 in Swan Slab Meadow. The Lodge Plan was not accompanied by detailed drawings to show the exact location of the proposed lodging relative to Camp 4. Nor did the documents contain any renderings or other architectural drawings or plans that would assist those concerned in understanding the dimensions and impact of the lodging project. Plaintiffs are informed and believe that the twelve fourplexes in the Swan Slab Meadow all are to be placed north of Northside Drive in the area currently used by climbers and other visitors as an open area for walking, the pursuit of solitude and for bouldering. Plaintiffs are also informed and believe that a number of the fourplexes will be within close proximity and easily seen from the cliffs known as Swan Slab.

27. The Draft Yosemite Lodge Area Development Concept Plan's Environmental Assessment ostensibly considered two alternatives: a "no action" alternative and the recommended proposal to build the lodging and housing complained of herein. The "no action" alternative was to repair in place the employee housing and visitor lodging facilities damaged by the January 1997 flood. The National Park Service, however, stated that Executive Order 11988 of the OMB excluded this possibility. It therefore offered only one alternative in its Environmental Assessment.

28. A brief period of time was prescribed for public comment on the EA. Some of the plaintiffs in this action submitted comments. Subsequently, after the comment period, they submitted additional comments to Defendants regarding the proposed location of employee housing at Camp 4 and lodging adjacent to Swan Slab. These objections sought a more thorough study and the consideration of alternative proposals. All of the objections sought to stop construction to the north of Northside Drive in the climbers' reserve.

29. Despite the fact that the flood of 1997 completely altered Defendants' understanding of the amount of available space for employee housing or visitor lodging in the Yosemite Lodge complex area, none of the decisions regarding the concentration of housing and lodging in this area were revisited in the Lodge Plan.

30. The comments submitted on the EA reflect substantial public controversy about the environmental effects of the proposed action with respect to the location of employee housing and the overall environmental effects of the new development proposed for the Yosemite Lodge area.

31. On July 16, 1997, defendant Albright approved the Lodge Plan with a Finding Of No Significant Impact. Because of

the FONSI, no Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS") was prepared in connection with the above-described project.

32. In the autumn of 1997, the Draft Valley Implementation Plan (VIP) was released. Because the earlier Lodge Plan already laid out the plans for the Yosemite Lodge complex, no further consideration was given to the construction plans for this area. This was true despite the fact that both Proposal E (the December 1996 draft housing plan) and the VIP discussed alternate sites for employee housing and specifically listed the Yosemite Village maintenance area as an available site if it was needed. The Yosemite Village maintenance area is a previously developed portion of the Valley, away from all camping and lodging, and only .6 miles from Yosemite Lodge. It is far removed from the flood zone and already contains, to the east and west, Park Service homes.

33. Some of the plaintiffs have made oral and written comments objecting to the inadequacy of the EA in assessing the environmental impact associated with the construction in the area between Camp 4 and Swan Slab, north of Northside Drive. They have requested that Defendants consider alternatives and have exhausted available administrative remedies.

34. Plaintiffs hired counsel, who indicated to Defendants in March 1998 Plaintiffs' intention to litigate regarding plans for construction in the climbers' reserve. Various prelitigation meetings, both in San Francisco and in Yosemite Valley, were held under a confidentiality agreement. Plaintiffs are now informed and believe that the Lodge Plan FONSI may be amended. No amendment has yet occurred. Plaintiffs are informed and believe that no Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared. Plaintiffs are informed and believe that, under the circumstances, no hard look has been given to analyzing the environmental impact on Camp 4/Swan Slab of the Lodge Plan dormitory construction proposals.

35. The construction of the buildings, as discussed above, will cause the individual plaintiffs and the members of the various plaintiff-organizations to suffer irreparable harm for which there is no adequate remedy at law. The noise and crowding that is an inevitable result of the establishment of lodging between Camp 4 and Swan Slab will destroy the tranquillity of this historic climbing cultural landscape. Climbers using the boulders and cliffs in the Swan Slab Meadow and along Swan Slab will lose any sense of wilderness experience as they are reduced to practicing their skills in the backyard of the lodgers. The pastoral nature of Swan Slab Meadow and the quiet and solitude that existed there for climbers and non-climbers alike will be destroyed. Both climbers and non-climbers will suffer a permanent and irreversible loss as the integrity of the recreational resources known as Camp 4/Swan Slab is destroyed by suburban sprawl.

FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF

(Violation of the National Environmental Policy Act and Council on Environmental Quality Regulations-- Failure to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement)

36. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference the allegations in paragraphs 1 through 35.

37. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 ("NEPA"), 42 U.S.C. §4332(2)(c), requires all agencies of the federal government to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for all major projects significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. The approval by the Park Service of the Lodge Plan was a major federal action significantly affecting the human environment within the meaning of Section 4332(2)(c). The failure of the Park Service to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement that considers the environmental impact of building lodging closer to Camp 4 and between Camp 4 and Swan Slab in the Swan Slab Meadow, as well as the environmental impact of additional acres of development on areas in the Valley not currently developed and on which there is natural cover, was an abuse of discretion and violated NEPA.

38. The Council on Environmental Quality ("CEQ") promulgated regulations to implement NEPA. These are found at 40 C.F.R. Pts. 1500 et seq. The Park Service's approval of the Lodge Plan without preparing and approving an EIS violated the following parts of these regulations:

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a. 1501.2 requires lead agencies to identify environmental effects and values in adequate detail so that they can be subjected to economic and technical analysis. Among the matters not considered in adequate detail was a discussion of

how the proposed construction would remove the availability of the impacted space in the climbers' reserve for less expensive visitor facilities such as a new or extended walk-in, no reservation required campground. Nor was there any discussion of how the demand for less expensive camping facilities would be met after the flood of 1997 removed approximately 362 drive-in campsites from use. Insofar as the EA failed to identify the environmental effects of the proposed action in sufficient detail, it violated Pt. 1501.2.

b. Insofar as the EA failed to properly identify the acres as being newly developed, the EA fails to describe adequately the environment of the area to be affected by the proposal and alternative, in violation of Pt. 1502.15.

c. Insofar as the EA failed to disclose the full environmental impacts of the proposed action, including any adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided and any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources that would be involved in the proposal should it be implemented, Defendants violated Pt. 1502.16. Since the Valley is the premier rockclimbing center in the world, the boulders and campsites within Camp 4/Swan Slab are a unique climbing recreational resource not found in any other part of the Valley or in any other national park within the United States, and the Swan Slab cliffs are one of the few beginner climbing practice areas within the Valley, a serious discussion of the diminishment of the experience within this unique recreational resource had to be faced and addressed. The failure of the EA to disclose environmental effects and irreversible and/or irretrievable resource commitments also includes the absence of an accurate discussion of the percentage of developed acres gained and lost in the Yosemite Lodge area.

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d. 1508.27 of the CEQ regulations requires that, in determining the "significance" of the effects of the action for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not to prepare an EIS, the responsible agency officials take into account the degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly "controversial." The site plans of the National Park Service were controversial, not only because there was opposition to them but because there was a substantial dispute over the overall effect of the construction proposals. In light of this controversy, the Park Service abused its discretion when it determined that it was not required to do an EIS in connection with the Lodge Plan.

e. 1508.27(a) and (b) require the National Park Service to consider the severity of the impact on the locale of a site-specific action. In its Environmental Assessment, the National Park Service did not adequately consider the direct or indirect effects on the recreational area and Park resource known as Camp 4/Swan Slab, save in a cursory way. More specifically, it did not consider the impact on this recreational area of building three-story dormitories immediately to the east of Camp 4 and placing the equivalent of a housing project (12 fourplexes with a footprint of no less than 1,600 square feet each) to the immediate east of the dormitories. The impact not adequately considered on this area includes, but is not limited to: the permanent introduction of a home for 336 employees within the climbers' reserve; the introduction of 190 visitors on a rotating but full-time basis within the reserve; the psychological loss to the campers resulting from the presence of lodgers, employees and permanent buildings in Camp 4/Swan Slab; the increase in noise and foot traffic; the loss of vistas; the loss of open space; and the loss of light.

f. 1508.27 of the CEQ regulations requires that, in determining the "significance" of the effects of the action for the purpose of determining whether to do an EIS, the responsible agency officials must consider not only the effect of their individual actions but the "cumulatively significant impact" on the environment by a series of interrelated decisions. More specifically, the National Park Service did not take into consideration the intensity of the impact on Camp 4/Swan Slab imposed by the necessity to build supporting facilities for the dormitories immediately to the south of Camp 4. Included within that supportive services project are an additional dorm south of Northside Drive, an athletic facility room, and other construction such as a parking lot the length of two football fields.

g. 1508.27(b)(3) of the CEQ regulations requires that, in determining the significance of the effects of the action for the purposes of determining whether or not to do an EIS, the responsible agency officials must take into account the "unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources...." The EA and the documents relating to it fail to treat, save in the most cursory way, the historical and cultural significance of Camp 4 in the world of American and international climbing. Nor did the EA give adequate consideration to the fact that the boulders and camping facilities are a unique climbing resource within the central rockclimbing area of the world.

h. In considering whether to complete an Environmental Impact Statement, the National Park Service did not consider the intensity of the impact, direct and indirect, on the users of the facility at the Yosemite Lodge area by the presence of the dormitory facilities and the supporting services for the dormitories immediately to the west of the Yosemite Lodge area.

i. 1502.9 of the CEQ regulations requires that, in determining whether to issue an Environmental Impact Statement (or a Supplemental EIS), the responsible agency officials must take into consideration any "...significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts." In deciding to go forward with employee housing and lodging projects in the Yosemite Lodge area without the issuance of an Environmental Impact Statement, the National Park Service failed to take into consideration the following significant new environmental circumstances:

1. the flood of January 1997 vastly limited the amount of available space in the Yosemite Lodge area for housing and lodging, thereby calling into question all prior decisions to make the Yosemite Lodge area a central location for either employee housing or expanded visitor lodging;

2. the flood of January 1997 showed for the first time that other areas, such as the Yosemite Lodge maintenance area, Curry Village and the Ahwahnee would be utterly unaffected by even a major flood and would, therefore, be better locations for the concentration of either lodging or employee housing;

3. a dispute continues to exist as to where the 100 year flood line should be drawn, even after the flood of January 1997, thus making it impossible to say with certainty that the Lodge Plan construction will conform with the "100 year" flood guidelines;

4. when the GMP proposed to keep 688 campsites for employee visitors, there were only two million visitors to the Park per year. When the January 1997 flood damaged Upper River Campground, Lower River Campground and portions of North Pines Campground there were only 421 campsites left for visitor use. By January 1997, four million people were visiting the Park each year. The demand for inexpensive overnight facilities had drastically increased at the very time the Lodge Plan was projecting the building of more expensive (\$70.00 or more per night) lodging;

5. in 1980 the GMP projected keeping 58 campsites at Camp 4 (Sunnyside). In the 18 years following the GMP the reputation of the Valley as a world climbing center had grown enormously, as had the demand for sites at Camp 4. By April of 1997 sites at Camp 4 had been reduced from 58 to 38, rather than increased to meet the enormously increased demand;

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6. when the Concession Service Plan ("CSP") was released in July 1992 and proposed the building of upgraded cabins (fourplexes) in the Yosemite Lodge area there was far more available space in the area and there were 362 more drive-in campsites;

7. when the CSP was released in July 1992 and proposed the building of upgraded cabins (fourplexes) it was specifically promised that public funds would not be used. The Lodge Plan proposes to use Congressionally appropriated flood monies; and

8. when the CSP was released in July 1992 and proposed the building of upgraded cabins (fourplexes) the boulders in the campers' reserve had not yet developed, through usage and the evolution of climbing, into unique recreational resources in and of themselves.

SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF
(Violation of the National Environmental Policy Act: Failure to Consider Alternatives)

47. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference the allegations in paragraphs 1 through 35.

48. A central requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA") (whether or not an Environmental Impact Statement or an Environmental Assessment is required) is that federal agencies must consider all reasonable alternatives to their proposed actions. Section 102(2)(e) of NEPA requires all agencies to "study, develop and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources." CEQ regulation 1502.14 requires an agency to explore all reasonable alternatives, and "for alternatives that were eliminated from detailed study, briefly describe the reasons for their being eliminated." 1507.2 restates the requirement of each agency to "... study, develop and describe alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources."

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49. CEQ regulation 1508.9(b) specifically requires that an agency issuing an Environmental Assessment "[S]hall include brief discussions of the need for the proposal, of alternatives as required by sections 102(2)(e) of the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives...."

50. The Draft Yosemite Lodge Area Development Concept Plan's Environmental Assessment ostensibly considered two alternatives: a "no action" alternative and the recommended proposal to build the lodging and housing complained of herein. The "no action" alternative was to repair in place the employee housing and visitor lodging facilities damaged by the January 1997 flood. The National Park Service, however, stated that Executive Order 11988 of the OMB excluded the possibility of acting on the "no action" alternative. It therefore offered only one alternative in its Environmental Assessment, the proposed action.

51. The Environmental Assessment failed to consider any alternates for size and site location of employee housing and/or lodging except the one complained of herein. Among the alternatives it failed to consider were:

a. placing whatever employee housing deemed necessary within the Park in the Yosemite Village maintenance area, which had already been designated in the December 1996 Proposal E housing plan and the 1997 VIP as an available site, and which had National Park Service and concessionaire executive housing developments nearby;

b. placing whatever employee housing deemed necessary within the Park within El Portal (a location outside of the Park), which had already been designated in the December 1996 Proposal E housing plan and the 1997 VIP as an available site, and which had National Park Service and concessionaire executive housing developments nearby;

c. placing whatever employee housing deemed necessary within the Park in the Curry Village area, which had been completely unaffected by the January 1997 flood;

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d. placing whatever employee housing deemed necessary within the Park within the Ahwahnee area, which had already been designated in the December 1996 Proposal E housing plan and the 1997 VIP as an available site, and which had National Park Service and concessionaire executive housing developments nearby;

e. placing whatever employee housing deemed necessary within the Park within the Lower Tecoya area, which had already been designated in the December 1996 Proposal E housing plan and the 1997 VIP as an available site, and which had National Park Service and concessionaire executive housing developments nearby;

f. placing whatever employee housing deemed necessary within the Park within the Lost Arrow dormitory complex, which had already been designated in the December 1996 Proposal E housing plan and the 1997 VIP as an available site, and which had National Park Service and concessionaire executive housing developments nearby;

- g. placing portions of the employee housing in one or more of the aforementioned areas and leaving only those portions in the Yosemite Lodge area that could be built south of Northside Drive;
- h. delaying the building of any permanent housing for employees and using temporary housing until all of the issues raised by the Valley Implementation Plan could be publicized, commented upon and responded to;
- i. placing more employee housing outside the Park in areas other than El Portal, so that the impact on any of the areas in the Park would be lessened;
- j. using other areas south of Northside Drive, within the old Yosemite Lodge complex and above the flood line, for employee housing;
- k. properly exploring and considering the possibility of rebuilding housing and lodging within the flood zone that would be impervious to or otherwise protected from future flooding;
- l. building the fourplexes within the Yosemite Lodge complex south of Northside Drive;
- m. building lodging structures other than single-story fourplexes to reduce the aggregate footprint;
- n. building lodging in the areas near the Yosemite Village maintenance area but closer to the residences of the Park and concession officials;
- o. expanding the number of inexpensive overnight facilities in the Camp 4/Swan Slab reserve rather than putting in expensive permanent lodging, since those facilities are desperately needed and would be compatible with the type of use already existing in the climbers' reserve; and/or
- p. reviewing and reversing the decision to concentrate visitor lodging in the Yosemite Lodge complex area rather than at Curry Village or in the Ahwahnee area, since these latter two areas were unaffected by the flood of 1997.

52. In failing to consider alternatives other than one proposed by the Lodge Plan the defendants violated 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(E) and various CEQ regulations including, but not limited to, Pts. 1502.14, 1505.1(c), 1507.2 and 1508.9(b).

THIRD CLAIM FOR RELIEF (Violation Of the National Park Service Organic Act)

52. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference the allegations in paragraphs 1 through 35.

53. The planning process commenced in 1980 by the defendants, and each of them, is carried out pursuant to the mandates of the National Park Service Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1 et seq. Section 20 of the Act requires that any development within the Park be carried out so that heavy visitation will not unduly impair Park values and so that such facilities will be limited to locations where the least damage to Park values will be caused. It is also the requirement of said Act that "... development shall be limited to those that are necessary and appropriate for public use and enjoyment of the National Park area in which they are located and that are consistent to the highest practical degree with the preservation and conservation of the areas."

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54. Eighteen years of planning have gone into the proposals that are now incorporated into the Valley Implementation Plan. However, the plans complained of herein were established in a quick decision-making process in April of 1997 that was ostensibly in response to the flood. The April 1997 site proposals will result in the building of permanent lodging and dormitories in areas that are not consistent with the mandates and limitations imposed on the National Park Service by the National Park Service Organic Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1 et seq., and/or by the regulations and policies promulgated thereunder.

FOURTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF

(Violation Of the Administrative Procedures Act)

55. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference the allegations in paragraphs 1 through 35.

56. The Administrative Procedures Act, 5 U.S.C. § 701, et seq., entitles a party to seek judicial review of an agency action where a legal wrong is alleged and the party alleging the violation is adversely affected or aggrieved by the agency action. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. §706(1)(A), a reviewing court shall hold unlawful and set aside an agency action found to be arbitrary, capricious, or otherwise not in accordance with the law. The action of the Park Service in approving and adopting the FONSI for the Lodge Plan **was** arbitrary, capricious and violative of the provisions of NEPA, as alleged in the First and Second Claims for Relief, supra, inasmuch as the record does not support the Park Service's finding that the project will have no significant impact on the environment. Specifically Defendants' decision was arbitrary and capricious in light of public comments submitted and other information in the record that indicates that the proposal may have significant adverse impacts greater than those set forth in the EA. The decision is also arbitrary and capricious in that it failed to consider numerous reasonable alternatives.

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WHEREFORE, PLAINTIFFS PRAY FOR RELIEF AS FOLLOWS:

1. For declaratory relief that the defendants have approved the Lodge Plan without first preparing and approving an EIS, in violation of applicable laws, that the defendants failed to discuss reasonable alternatives to the proposed action in the EA, in violation of applicable law, that the defendants violated sections of the CEQ Regulations in determining whether the project had no significant impact, and that the defendants acted arbitrarily and capriciously and in violation of law in making a FONSI with respect to the proposal.

2. For declaratory relief that the defendants must: prepare an Environmental Impact Statement; give a hard look at the environmental consequences of its proposed dormitory and visitor lodging construction plans; consider all reasonable alternatives to its dormitory and visitor lodging construction plans; and that a new comment must be allowed following the finalization of any housing and/or lodging plan if that plan proposes dormitory and/or lodging construction in the Yosemite Lodge complex area that falls within the climbers' reserve.

3. For injunctive relief compelling the defendants to comply with the provisions of NEPA and the implementing regulations by preparing an EIS for the

project, or supplementing the EA to discuss reasonable alternatives to the proposed action and setting aside the FONSI made in connection with the proposal.

4. For preliminary and permanent injunctive relief prohibiting demolition, site preparation and/or construction in connection with the construction of employee housing at Camp 4 and/or the construction of visitor lodging in the Swan Slab area, and for relief prohibiting the commencement of any construction of employee housing at Camp 4 or employee housing or visitor lodging in the Swan Slab areas until such time as the requirements of NEPA, the CEQ Regulations, the National Park Services Organic Act and the APA have been complied with by the defendants.

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5. For an order awarding Plaintiffs costs of suit, including reasonable attorneys' fees and expert witness fees.

6.?For such other and additional relief as the Court shall deem just and proper.

Dated: May ____, 1998???? ?DUANE, LYMAN, SELTZER & GORELICK

By: RICHARD P. DUANE

Attorney for Plaintiff

DUANE, LYMAN, SELTZER & GORELICK

2000 Center Street, Suite 300

Berkeley, California 94704

Opening Remarks by John Middendorf during the panel discussion, The Future of our National Parks and Public Lands.

1997 American Alpine Club meeting, Dec 6, 1997

Hello, my name is John Middendorf, and today I represent the organization The Friends of Yosemite Valley. The Friends of Yosemite Valley was formed this last summer by a group of climbers concerned with the ability of climbers to pursue their craft in Yosemite Valley.

Access to climbing all over the country is currently being threatened. Public land managers are proposing banning fixed anchors which would essentially close climbing in many areas. Even in areas with no fixed anchors, such as the Overlook in a National Forest near Flagstaff, Arizona, climbing has been restricted because officials were concerned with the safety of another user group, tourists, whom they feared would fall off the edge trying to look at the vertical crawlers, even though this has never happened.

In Yosemite, the living and camping arrangements for climbers is being seriously altered by the current plan to develop the Yosemite Lodge area. The multi-story employee dorms planned to be built in the east end of Camp 4 is a travesty. The expansion of living quarters for employees of the concession, Delaware North, clearly defines the future of Yosemite: more infrastructure for the concession, and more service units to serve that infrastructure. The approved Lodge plan clearly shows an expansion of lodging, despite the misleading statement regarding a reduction in the number of rooms, due to the increase in SIZE of each room. Instead of rustic cabins which have no foundation and no plumbing, larger multi-story lodging is being planned. The entire area east of Camp 4 to Swan Slab, now a beautiful wooded area with excellent bouldering, is planned for parking lots and hotel units.

The development of the Lodge area will take place this winter. The Lodge plan is not part of the Valley Implementation Plan. It is a development plan which was rushed through and "approved" earlier this year with very little public input. Only 197 comments were received, most of which were from climbers. We find its absence from the VIP very conspicuous, since it is an area that will see some of the most development in the Park. We feel its shows the intended direction of the Park: increased infrastructure and continued subterfuge about the facts.

The DCP (the document that "approved" the Lodge Plan) indicates that Camp 4, the only walk-in campground, is to be closed during the construction. I have been told by a Park Service official (Gary Colliver) that the future reservations will NEED to be made by telephone and credit card. We feel that these factors, along with the planned reduction of Camp 4, that climbers as a user group are clearly not being considered. This is wrong, and the future and the ability of climbers to climb in Yosemite, is in danger.

END OF PANEL INTRO

A question and answer period followed the opening statements. Jerry Mitchell, the NPS official in charge of GNP implementation, responded to the question of trees to the effect that they had planned to cut those not considered of value and try to save those with value. The following question was how they determined the value of each species, which was answered incompletely. Jerry Mitchell also admitted that the National Park Service was catching flak for the absence of the Lodge plan in the VIP. When asked why the Park Service gave the concession contract in 1992 to Delaware North, a gambling and resort firm based in Atlantic City, rather than to The Yosemite Restoration Trust, who had a much more environmental friendly plan, he responded that he wasn't working for the park at the time, but he believed it was because Delaware North had a better proposal. It made me wonder what that could have been, since they have been proposing more infrastructure within the park heavily since they began their tenure.

After Jerry had answered another question to which his response included a comment about limitations due to cost, I made the comment that I thought it was a shame that when I hear about these great proposals which are impossible due to cost, and I said I regretted that the NPS had choose to spend much of the \$178 million dollars appropriated by Congress after the flood on rebuilding the concessionaire's facilities, rather than the other more timely projects, like a light rail system.

I hope everyone who has a desire for more walk-in campgrounds and less hotels will get involved in contacting the Yosemite National Park Service and the Department of the Interior.

Camp 4 National Historic Register Supplementary Application, by Dick Duane

Introduction

In 1890, twenty-six years before the passing of the National Park Service Act, Congress set aside fourteen hundred and fifty-two square miles to make the Yosemite National Park. This visionary act was in large part brought about by the writings and efforts of one of the first in the long line of California's distinguished mountaineers: John Muir. The jewel of the park has always been the Yosemite Valley (the ``Valley"), and the Valley has been the focal point of a rich California mountaineering tradition. Rock climbing in the Valley, which started almost as soon as the settlers arrived, has a distinguished history that belongs to local, regional, national, and even world history. But one period in that history stands above all others and alters everything thereafter: For a moment in time that commences in the 1950s and runs through the early 1960s, the young Americans who climbed in the Valley were the best rock climbers in the world. Their vision and achievement changed them into world legends, and changed the Valley into the world center of rock climbing.

In the middle of the Valley, along its northern rim, is a campground called ``Sunnyside" by the National Park Service and ``Camp 4" by all the climbers who use it.

Shortly after World War II, a group of young Americans, continuing the long tradition of Valley mountaineering, made Camp 4 their base camp, home, and cultural center as they invented new techniques, created new equipment, laid out new mountaineering ethics, practiced their skills on the camp boulders, and dreamed of climbing the great walls of the Valley that were long deemed unclimbable. In astonishingly short order, these young Americans established ascents on the most famous rock edifices of the Valley: the Lost Arrow, Sentinel Dome, Half Dome, El Capitan and others.

So astonishing and magnificent were the routes the Americans pioneered, and so creative were their accomplishments, that Camp 4 became a mecca for the rock climbers from every nation. It can be said without a scintilla of hyperbole, that it is the aspiration of every serious rock climber in the world to come to the Yosemite Valley, to live in and absorb the history of Camp 4, to attempt these great routes, and if possible, to improve upon them.

Tom Frost and Pat Ament lived in Camp 4 and participated in these historic achievements. Their application to place Camp 4 on the National Historical Register is currently pending. The American Alpine Club, through this supplementary application, wishes to join their efforts by providing additional information on the historic context and integrity of Camp 4. Because the history associated with Camp 4 resonates so widely, it is necessary to provide perspectives from local, regional, national and even international viewpoints.

The American Alpine Club, founded in 1902, is the leading national organization in the United States devoted to mountaineering and the multitude of issues facing climbers today. Among other things, its bylaws dedicate the organization to ``the conservation and preservation of the mountain environment . . . and the representation of the interests and concerns of the American climbing community." The club presents this supplementary application not only on behalf of its members, but on behalf of climbers from throughout the world who have for the last half-century seen Camp 4 as their spiritual home.

1. Reflections on the Code of Federal Regulations 60.4 and on National Park Service Bulletin 15, ``How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation"

The criteria for determining the eligibility of a property for inclusion on the National Historical Register are established in 36 Code of Federal Regulations 60.4 (hereinafter ``36 C. F. R. 60.4"). Bulletin 15, ``How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" (hereinafter ``Bulletin 15"), amplifies and interprets those criteria. It seems worthwhile to state what the criteria are and to reflect on their interpretation.

To obtain registration, a site, building, structure, or object must possess *integrity of location*, design, setting, materials, workmanship, *feeling and association*, and must additionally meet one of four independent tests. It must be:

(a.) associated with *events* that have made a *significant contribution* to the *broad* patterns of our *history*; or

(b.) associated with the *lives* of persons *significant in our past* ; or

(c.) embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that present the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that *represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction*; or

(d.) have yielded, or may be likely to yield, *information* important in pre-history or *history*. (36 C.F.R. 60.4, emphasis added).

Bulletin 15 illuminates the overall tone and sweep of these criteria. Since placement on the National Historical Register (hereinafter the "Register") is merely "the beginning of a national census of historic properties," the criteria are "written *broadly* to recognize the *wide variety* of historic properties associated with our . . . history" (Bulletin 15, p.1, emphasis added).

This guideline of inclusivity does much to help interpret the criteria. Bulletin 15 makes it clear that in determining whether a place is "associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history," or with "the lives of persons that are significant in our past," the criteria are meant to refer to a wide or extensive range of individuals or events. Events or people can achieve sufficient prominence because of their connection to any of a plethora of themes in our past experience that may seem minor when compared to the larger, dominant experiences of American history. For example, Bulletin 15 lists as potential "Areas of Significance" such disparate themes as Recreation/Entertainment, Conservation, Social History, Invention, Exploration, Settlement, the Performing Arts, and even "Other" (ibid, p.8).

Since "the significance of an historic property can be judged and explained only when it is evaluated within its historic context" (ibid., p.7), the first task of any Register applicant is to establish that historic context. Again, the term "historic" is used in a democratic and inclusive manner: the history may be a local, regional, state, or national history (ibid, pp. 8-10).

The examples of registered properties given in Bulletin 15 clearly illustrate this democratic, inclusive meaning of the phrase "historic context." A local politician and businessman's home was registered because the man was instrumental in founding a town in Illinois around the turn of the century (ibid, p. 14). A log house in Alabama was registered because it exemplified a vernacular architectural style called "Dog Trot" (ibid. p.19).¹

Some of the registration criteria help evaluate material things such as "objects," "buildings," and "structures." However, Bulletin 15 makes clear that the Register is also to include appropriate properties even if they are only "sites":

A *site* is the location of a significant event, a . . . historic . . . activity, or a building or structure, whether standing or ruined or vanished, where the location itself possesses historic [or] cultural value regardless of the value of any existing structure. (ibid., p.5, emphasis added)

Significantly, for our purposes, Bulletin 15 explicitly lists as examples of sites both "campsite" and "natural feature

(such as a rock formation) having cultural significance" (ibid., p.5). Indeed, a site can be nothing more than "a hilltop" (ibid., p. 13), "an open field," or a "knoll" (ibid. p. 8) if the requisite integrity and historic significance are established. Since a site is not evaluated for the quality or significance of the edifices built upon it, many of the criteria established in 36 C.F.R. 60.4 are irrelevant when evaluating a site. For example, it would be meaningless to try to determine whether a site is the "work of a master craftsman" or whether it has the "distinctive characteristics of a method of construction."

To assure that enough time has past to develop an historical perspective, Bulletin 15 generally requires that properties considered for the Register must have achieved significance fifty or more years ago. However, even this rule is interpreted in such a way as to be inclusive rather than exclusive. "A resource whose construction began over fifty years ago, but the completion overlaps the fifty year period by a few years or less. . ." can be placed on the Register even if the property achieved its "significance" within the last fifty years. (36 C.F.R. 60.4(g), Bulletin 15, p. 41).

A property may also be included irrespective of the date at which it achieved significance, if the property is deemed to be of "exceptional importance." (Bulletin 15, p. 42). In the spirit of inclusivity, the Bulletin again makes clear that *exceptional importance*, does not require the property to be of national significance. *Exceptional importance* is simply a "... measure of a property's importance within the appropriate historic context, whether the scale of that context is local, state or national. For example, a laundry in New Orleans was deemed to be of exceptional importance because it was one of the few examples of the Art Deco Style remaining in New Orleans.

Furthermore, neither 36 C.F.R. 60.4 nor Bulletin 15 allows a property to be accepted or rejected for registration because of an evaluator's opinion of the lifestyles or idiosyncracies of the users of the property. It might be relevant, when considering the registration of a property, to determine whether a certain group that used the property had distinguishing characteristics (for example, did the Native Americans who used a ceremonial site, or the jazz musicians who used a nightclub, represent a cohesive community?). Clearly, however, Native American gathering places, gold mining encampments, and Civil War campsites may be eligible without first determining whether the site users were rowdy, independent-minded, or pious. Certainly, an emigrant trail might be registered even if it was established that some of the trail users were bandits or horse thieves. In short, moral judgments are irrelevant.

2. The Historic Context Within Which to View Camp 4.

2.1 The Chronological Period, Geographical Limits, and Themes That Provide a Perspective from Which to Evaluate the Significance of Camp 4

Bulletin 15 suggests that an application to have a property placed on the Register contain information about the chronological period and the geographical limits, that will provide a perspective from which to evaluate the significance of a property.

The chronological period has been discussed by Mr. Frost and Mr. Ament in their application and is incorporated herein by reference. Suffice it to say that Camp 4, which became the gathering place of choice for all Yosemite Valley climbers after the Second World War,

quickly developed into the cauldron out of which Americans forged world-class mountaineering achievements for decades. Those achievements continue to the present day.

The term "Camp 4" refers to approximately five to six acres of forested meadow extending northward from Northside Drive to just short of the boulder-strewn talus slopes at the northern rim of the Valley. Its western border is roughly marked by a natural rock formation called Nixon boulder and a group of campsites. Its eastern border is roughly marked by the edge of a dirt parking lot to the south, and a natural rock formation called the Thriller to the north. Its northern perimeter runs along a trail roughly parallel to Northside Drive. That trail proceeds in an east-west direction with a natural rock formation called the Wine Boulder on its southern side, and a boulder sometimes referred to as Higgins'

Face along its northern edge.

To the immediate east of Camp 4 lies an open area called Swan's Slab Meadow. To the east of that meadow lies a series of low lying cliffs. These cliffs, called Swan's Slab, provide one of the few areas in the Valley where beginning rock climbers can practice.²

The essence of Camp 4 is open space, trees, campsites and boulders.

Bulletin 15 (p.8) also suggests that an applicant choose from the list of "Areas of Significance" before developing the "historic context" to be used when evaluating a property for placement on the Register. Mountaineering (defined here as mountain and rock wall climbing for pleasure, moral and imaginative adventure, spiritual fulfillment, and a sense of achievement) easily fits the area of significance described as "Entertainment/Recreation" and will be dealt with as such. However, defining mountaineering merely as "entertainment" or "recreation" does not reflect the depth of its impact on the human spirit. So much of its history is entwined with the development of an ethic that has a proper respect for the mountains and walls upon which it is practiced, that climbing might be considered under the rubric of "conservation." Mountaineering in California is so connected to both the preservation of Yosemite Valley and the history of the state that it could be considered a part of "social history." Because mountain climbing so frequently takes one into the unknown, both geographically and emotionally, it could also be classified as a form of "exploration."³

Whatever theme the evaluator deems appropriate, we hope he will agree that the history of mountaineering, and its connection to Camp 4, is palpable and significant on both a local, regional, national, and international level.

2.2 Mountaineering: A World Perspective

We would digress if we lingered long on the international antecedents of the mountaineering that occurred in Yosemite Valley.⁴ However, since the Valley eventually became the center for "big wall" climbing worldwide, a copy of Doug Scott's, *Big Wall Climbing: Development, Techniques and Aids*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974) is included with this supplementary application. Scott, a well-known British climber and writer, traces big wall climbing from its earliest antecedents through its development in nineteenth-century Europe in the eastern Alps, Germany, Austria, and the western Alps, and culminates his history of big wall climbing as the pursuit reaches its highest state of development in Yosemite Valley. The front matter and first chapter from Scott's book, and the introduction and first chapter from *On Top Of The World: An Illustrated History of Mountain Climbing*, by Schowell Styles (New York: MacMillan Company 1967), are also attached as Exhibits 7 and 8 to our supplementary application. These excerpts provide cursory but helpful discussions of climbing from a world perspective.

A few points may help set the broad historical context for Camp 4. Scholars seem to agree that the peoples of Asia found a love of the mountains far earlier than their Western counterparts. Chinese and Japanese poetry, from the sixth and eighth centuries respectively, celebrates the mountains with great delicacy and force. Many of the peaks of the greatest mountain ranges on earth have been held sacred for centuries by both the Hindus and the Buddhists (Styles, *On Top Of The World*, pp. xvi-xvii). Although Europeans came comparatively late to the love of mountains, their embrace of mountaineering is easily traced. In 1492, Monseigneur de Ville accomplished the goal set by Charles II of France by climbing the "inaccessible" Mont Aiguille. In 1786, Michele Paccard and a companion stood atop Mont Blanc. By the mid-1850s, the golden age of European climbing was in full swing, with British amateurs climbing throughout Europe. In 1850, the Alpine Club of London was formed. In 1867, the "impossible" Matterhorn was climbed by Edward Whymper.⁵

And what of climbing in the Americas before the Europeans arrived? In the fifteenth century, Chilean Indians reached the summits of the 22,000-foot peaks that border the Atacama Desert (Chris Jones, *Climbing in North America* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976], p. 23). John Muir reports of "heavy obsidian arrowheads found on some of the highest [Sierra Nevada] peaks . . . and Indian hunting blinds on the summits of the nearby White Mountains" (John Muir, *The Mountains of California* [Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press, 1991], p. 320). "First

ascent" parties also found Indian structures on the summits of Colorado's 14,345-foot Blanca Peak and Wyoming's 13,165-foot Cloud Peak (Jones, p. 23).

A modern climbing tradition was already established in North America before the great Yosemite Valley ascents and is described in Tom Frost's and Pat Ament's application to the Keeper of the National Historical Register. California climbing will be treated separately, since it is so intimately connected with the accomplishments in Yosemite Valley, but some remarks about climbing elsewhere in North America are also relevant to the context being established. Canada's Mount Bonney was climbed in 1888. Two Americans from Yale University climbed Mount Temple in the Canadian Rockies in 1894. The Appalachian Mountain Club of Boston was launching climbing expeditions before the turn of the century. Such was the popularity of climbing on Seattle's Mount Rainier that a guide service was started as early as 1890 (see, generally, Jones, Chapters 1-10).

The point of these randomly chosen facts and rough history is that the love of mountains is endemic to all cultures that have access to them. The universality of their appeal, and the impulse to record and celebrate that appeal, is testament to the strength of the ties between mountaineering and the human spirit. Those ties must be considered when determining whether the historic mountaineering achievements associated with Camp 4 have significance as defined by the Code of Federal Regulations and Bulletin 15.

2.3 Mountaineering as Part of California's and America's Cultural History

We will shortly describe the climbing that occurred in Yosemite Valley and the significance of Camp 4 in this story. However, it seems worthwhile to pause momentarily and place this California climbing history within a broader cultural history of the state lest we take too myopic a view of its significance.

The California State Librarian, Kevin Starr, is well qualified to provide such an overview. A native Californian, Starr worked at the Yosemite Lodge, just south of Camp 4, during the summers of 1960 and 1961. He has a master of arts and a doctorate from Harvard University and a master of library science from the University of California at Berkeley. Dr. Starr has been engaged in a thirty-year study of the cultural history of California and has published four volumes of that history through the Oxford University Press.

Dr. Starr's statement, taken at the headquarters of the California State Library in Sacramento on July 2, 1998, for submission with this supplementary application, and Chapter 6 of his book, *Americans and the California Dream: 1850-1915* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), are attached as Exhibits 9 and 10. Both documents should be read in full to grasp the depth of the role mountaineering has played in California's cultural history.

The central points of Starr's scholarship can be briefly stated. California immigrants were challenged by a bold and dramatic landscape: two major mountain systems, the Sierra Nevada and the Coast Range, lay longitudinally down the Western and Eastern extremes of the state. Though much of the California mountain experience was ultimately destructive--consider the effects of the gold rush--as early as the 1850s a sort of "tourist" began to argue against ecological indifference and, indeed, to vehemently rebuke it. Within a very short time, a "sense of sport" arose (Starr, Exhibit 10, *Americans and the California Dream*, p. 175).

While Californians began to engage in other tourist activities (such as camping), it was in mountaineering that the state most closely articulated its emerging character. Starr concludes that:

Of all attempts to connect imaginatively with the environment, mountaineering had the highest degree of self-consciousness. From the start it was more a matter of science and art than necessity." (ibid., p.177).

Starr explains this love of mountaineering among the settlers who first distinguished themselves in the California mountains:

The first generation were New Englanders strongly infused with the American Protestant Puritan imagination of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. [They] tended to see nature not just in exactitude, but they blended John Locke's sensationism with theology. They found it as an evocation of the divine mind. To find nature in the American continent was to find something akin to scripture itself, a scripture of divine creativity. (Starr, Exhibit 9, p. 7, lines 7-14).⁶

...Mountaineering played a crucial role in the defining of the California ethos in the nineteenth century in terms of trying to say that California should be more, and the premise is this: If nature is a reservation in some sense, not that of scientific reality but the divine mind, then certainly the divine has developed him or herself . . . in the great mountains of California...." (Ibid., p. 12, lines 4-12).

In looking at the early history of mountaineering in California, one is struck by this fusion of the practical with a moral imagination. Starr notes:

If you look at the great mountaineers of California and writers--Whitney, William Brewer, or Clarence King and, of course, the great John Muir and the great Joseph LeConte--you see this fusion; you see this wonderful fusion of mountaineering as physical fact and as moral adventure. (Ibid. p. 10, lines 9-15).

Who were these great early mountaineers? The distinguished founders of the California

mountaineering tradition are many. Starr includes:

· William Henry Brewer, Field Director of the California Geological Survey. A graduate of the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale, Brewer came to California in 1860 after two years of climbing and studying in Europe. He then led the field work for the California Geological Survey. Starr concludes that by 1864, no man knew California, and especially its mountains, better. Although unpublished until 1930, Brewer's letters and journals, issued under the title *Up and Down California: The Journal of William Brewer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), must be considered the founding statement of California mountaineering. (Starr, Exhibit 10, *Americans and the California Dream*, p. 179).

· Clarence King. Henry Adams considered him the outstanding young man of his generation. King assisted Brewer with the California survey and, at the young age of 24, was named by Congress to direct the Fortieth Parallel Survey. His writings for the *Atlantic Monthly* were later published in a series of sketches under the title *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada* (1872) which is, in the estimation of W. C. Brownell, the literary critic, "one of the very few books that have a clear title to be called 'unique'." Brownell continues, "It stands so completely by itself that it is hard to find the comparison that fits it" (quoted in Thurman Wilkins, *Clarence King: A Biography*, [Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988]). Starr concludes that "in Clarence King, mountaineer, the American in California made symbolic contact with the lost life of the continent itself: and from that union there came new wonder and new power of soul." (Starr, Exhibit 10, *Americans and the California Dream*, p. 180).

· Joseph Le Conte. Le Conte, according to Starr, was one of the "signature" Californians. A professor at U.C. Berkeley, Le Conte taught such writers as Jack London and Frank Norris and was one of the founders of the Sierra Club. He was trained as a scientist and engaged himself intellectually with the reconciliation of Darwinism and traditional religion.

According to Starr, mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada ``was essential to [Le Conte], absolutely. He was part of the Sierra Club group." (see, generally, Starr, Exhibit 9, pp. 28-30).

· John Muir. It would be hard to cover John Muir's achievements succinctly, and so much has been written about them that it hardly seems necessary to review them. His time in the Yosemite Valley and the experiences that he had climbing had a powerful effect on him, on the history of the state, and on the direction of the conservation movement in the country. He wrote eloquently of the first attempts to climb South Dome in Yosemite Valley (see Exhibit 11). His article on the climbing of Mt. Ritter in the Sierra Nevada is a classic of mountaineering literature. His book *The Mountains of California* , ``had a great effect on the National Park Movement" (Starr, Exhibit 9, p. 24, line 23). Muir was the first president of the Sierra Club and a president of the American Alpine Club. Starr notes that to Muir, ``mountaineering was a form of religious witness, a worshiping of that sacred and awful power which pulsed at the core of creation. As a prophet of conservation, he warned Californians not to squander what the ages had prepared. He became an avatar of all the Sierras promise: simplicity, strength, joy and affirmation." (Starr, *California and the American Dream*, p.188)

Starr's book on the California mountaineering tradition ends as of 1915. He notes, however, in his statement taken on July 2, 1998, two other more recent mountaineers who have distinguished themselves in the cultural history of the state:

· David Brower. Brower, who made eighteen first ascents in Yosemite Valley, is best known as the executive director of the Sierra Club from 1952 to 1965. He created the Sierra Club photographic book series, was an endless fighter in many of the major conservation battles in the United States, and was nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize. However, to Starr, it was Brower's efforts as part of the Tenth Mountain Division in World War II that made him ``a hero as well as a great man." (Starr, Exhibit 9, p. 38, lines 12-16.)⁷

· Galen Rowell. Rowell's book, *The Vertical World of Yosemite* , is enclosed herein as an additional document submitted in support of this application. Rowell has spent years staying in and visiting Camp 4. His nature and mountain photography earned him the title Photographer Laureate of Yosemite Valley (this honor is a rotating one), and he is one of the best-known nature photographers in the country. While his climbing exploits are well known throughout the climbing community, it is interesting to note that Starr sees Rowell's photography as following in the tradition of such famous Sierra photographers as Ansel Adams and Edward Weston. These three photographers are, according to Starr, collectively ``classed by themselves, and they are all, especially Adams, profoundly affected by the mountains." It is Starr's opinion that Rowell's work will make him an important figure in the cultural history of California. (Starr, Exhibit 9, page 36, lines 22-37.)

Finally, any discussion of the intellectual and cultural significance of Yosemite Valley climbing would be incomplete without a mention of the formation of the Sierra Club. Many of the club's founding members and leading figures, including Dick Leonard, Bestor Robinson, David Brower, and John Muir, were to become prominent names in the pre-World War II climbing history of Yosemite Valley. The club as a whole is an outgrowth of the Yosemite mountaineering tradition, teaching climbing skills to new mountaineers and contributing greatly to the environmental cause in the United States.

In summary, the mountaineering tradition in California is as rich as can be found in any part of America and has played an enormous role in the intellectual and cultural history of the country. Many early California mountaineers became prominent not only locally, but nationally and even internationally as well. It is out of the tradition they created that modern day Yosemite Valley climbing emerged.

2.4 Yosemite Valley Climbing Before World War II

During the nineteenth century, rock climbing in Yosemite Valley developed into a popular recreational sport. The written record of climbs dates almost from the moment the early settlers found the valley. The sport continued to grow during the early twentieth century. By 1931 the Rock Climbing Section of the Sierra Club was guiding organized attempts on some of the most spectacular individual faces. Between 1933 and the start of World War II, some forty first ascents were made.

The application of Tom Frost and Pat Ament discusses this history and is incorporated herein by reference. In the introduction to his *Climber's Guide to Yosemite Valley* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1971), Steve Roper excerpts an excellent account of the pre-war era (see Exhibit 13). The account is taken from the Yosemite Valley chapter (written by Richard Leonard, David Brower, and William Dunmire) of the 1954 edition of *A Climber's Guide to the High Sierra*.

For the sake of completeness, sections of that history are included:

“It was not until 1833 that the white man is known to have seen Yosemite Valley. Joseph Reddeford Walker and party came from the vicinity of Bridgeport . . . to the Valley rim. There they marveled at ‘lofty precipices . . . more than a mile high.’ The first rock-climbing attempt by white man was soon stopped by difficulty, for ‘on making several attempts we found it utterly impossible for a man to descend.’

“ . . . Yosemite soon became a source of attraction for tourists from all over the world. One of the earliest to arrive was James M. Hutchings, who first came to the Valley in 1855. Throughout the early history of the Valley he was interested in attempting to climb every point around the Valley.

“John Muir first came to the Sierra in 1868. Through him more than any other man has the beauty of the region been made known to the entire world. His climbs in Yosemite Valley and the High Sierra, many of them the earliest of which we have knowledge, place him among the pioneers of California mountaineering He made the first ascents of Cathedral Peak and Mount Ritter, and was the first to traverse under the Lost Arrow along Fern Ledge

“In early October of 1864 Clarence King . . . made the first serious topographical and geological reconnaissance of the Yosemite Valley. On this survey they climbed practically every summit on a circuit of the rim of the valley. This circuit included only the easier points, such as El Capitan, Eagle Peak, Yosemite Point, North Dome, Basket Dome, Mount Watkins, Sentinel Dome, and the Cathedral Rocks. Any summits which were much beyond this standard of difficulty seemed to them completely beyond the range of human ability. In 1865 the California Geological Survey wrote concerning Half Dome, Mount Starr King and Mount Broderick, ‘Their summits are absolutely inaccessible.’

“ . . . James M. Hutchings and two others made the first recorded attempt on Half Dome in 1869, but were stopped at a saddle east of the Dome. After at least two intervening attempts . . . , George G. Anderson, finally engineered his way to the top on October 12, 1875.

“Inspired by the success on Half Dome, adventurous climbers turned their attention to Mount Starr King, the ‘extremely steep, bare, inaccessible cone of granite’ referred to by Whitney in the *Yosemite Guide Book*. George B. Bayley and E.S. Schuyler made the ascent in August 1876 Bayley was one of the most remarkable climbers of the time. In 1876 Muir recorded that ‘Mounts Shasta, Whitney, Lyell, Dana, and the Obelisk (Mount Clark) already have felt his foot, and years ago he made desperate efforts to ascend the South Dome (Half Dome), eager for the first honors.’ Later he was distinguished by an early ascent of Cathedral Peak, and an ascent of Mount Rainier during which he was seriously injured by a fall into a crevasse

“After the great ascents of the ‘inaccessible’ summits of Yosemite, there was a period of quiet in the climbing history, for everything seemed to have been done. Hutchings had claimed the ascent of all Yosemite points, except Grizzly Peak and the Cathedral Spires, and a climber of another generation came forward in 1885 to make the ascent to Grizzly Peak. He was Charles A. Bailey, who later became an enthusiastic member of the Sierra Club, locating, climbing, and naming Sierra Point for the Club.

“Since it now appeared that all the major summits in the Yosemite region had been climbed, there was a long gap in the climbing history, broken only by the exploratory routes of a few outstanding climbers of the period. Those whose climbs are best known are S. L. Foster, Joseph N. LeConte, Charles and Enid Michael, William Kat, and Ralph S. Griswold LeConte has been remembered through the description of his ascent of the gully on Grizzly Peak, which permits a route to the Diving board on Half Dome. He also wrote of several other ‘scrambles about Yosemite’ of nearly three decades ago. It has been said of the Michaels that they climbed everything that did not require pitons. The same description might apply to Kat and Griswold

“Again it seemed that nothing more could be done. However, in the early thirties, a new phase of rock climbing was growing, based on the development of modern technique in Europe. In the summer of 1931, Robert L.M. Underhill, the leading American exponent of the use and management of the rope in rock work, interested Californians in this phase of climbing. It has been mentioned that some very remarkable climbing was done without the knowledge of this safety technique; but the early climbers who have discussed the matter agree that their climbing frequently involved unjustifiable hazard. Moreover, it was clear to them that they could not attempt routes of very high angle and small holds. Thus the introduction of a new type of climbing, combined with the protection of piton craft, again opened a new field.

“It was not until September 2, 1933 that the first rock climbing section of the Sierra Club felt competent to make organized attempts upon the spectacular unclimbed faces and spires of Yosemite. Although as long ago as 1886 Hutchings, in reporting the relatively easy ascent of Grizzly Peak, claimed that the last ‘unclimbed summit’ of Yosemite had been ascended, nevertheless the Cathedral Spires, the Church Spires, the Church Tower, the Arrowhead, Split Pinnacle, Pulpit Rock, Watkins Pinnacles, and the Lost Arrow still stood forth without even an attempt ever having been recorded against them. In addition to these summits, there was a field, practically unexplored, of route finding on faces, aretes, gullies, and chimneys. Among these may be mentioned Washington Column, Royal Arches, Panorama Cliff, Glacier Point, Yosemite Point Couloir, Cathedral Chimney, and the arete of the Lower Brother. Ropes, pitons, and trained experience in their use were the keys to these ascents, which were later to become so popular. Climbers, profiting by the achievements of their predecessors, added still more ascents to the growing list of Yosemite Routes (quoted in Roper, *A Climber's Guide*, pp.2-7).

Roper continues:

During the eight years between the 1933 trip and the entry of this country into World War II, about forty first ascents were made. The most active climbers of this period were Kenneth Adam, David Brower, Jules Eichorn, Morgan Harris, Richard Leonard, L. Bruce Meyer, and Harvey Voge. Brower made eighteen first ascents, twelve of them with Harris.

During World War II there was a climbing hiatus, but when the war ended a new generation of climbers quickly

appeared." (Roper, *A Climber's Guide*, p. 7)

2.5 Yosemite Valley Climbing Since World War II

The Frost-Ament application submitted to the Register contains an extensive review of climbing in Yosemite Valley after the Second World War. This account is incorporated by reference into this supplementary application of the American Alpine Club.

2.6 Bouldering In Camp 4 and Yosemite Valley

The Frost-Ament application made reference to bouldering in Yosemite Valley, but focused largely on the history of rock climbing and big wall ascents in the Valley. To ensure that the record is complete, it should be understood that "bouldering," a form of mountaineering that started out as a way to practice for larger climbs, developed into a subcategory of mountaineering that moved on to the world stage with Yosemite Valley and Camp 4 as one of the centers of the sport. "Boulder problems" are usually extremely difficult, and it is exquisite to watch a climber maneuver them. Grace and strength are essentials. Because the word "boulder" conjures up anything beyond a large rock, it is important to understand that many of the boulders are magnificent natural features that have enormous aesthetic appeal.

To assist in understanding that aesthetic appeal, a copy of the excellent guidebook *Stone Crusade: A Historical Guide to Bouldering in America*, by John Sherman (Golden, Colorado: The American Alpine Club Press, 1994), is attached hereto. (See also photographs from Camp 4 in Kevin Worrall's article, attached hereto as Exhibit 4). Because it provides both relevant information about the historical context within which to view Camp 4, and powerful evidence (i.e., the integrity of Camp 4's site) regarding the "feelings" associated with Camp 4, a portion of Sherman's guidebook is excerpted herein.

Yosemite Valley

It is only fitting that the mecca of world rock climbing have some awesome bouldering. Periodically, massive chunks of granite calve off of Yosemite's towering walls, and tumble down to the valley floor. Boulders are found throughout the Valley, but three areas get the most traffic: Housekeeping boulders, Sentinel Boulder, and *Camp 4*. [Emphasis added]

Due to its boulders and early morning sunshine, most climbers pitch their tents at Camp 4

. . . You could also drive right up to Columbia Boulder, the big rock in the middle of camp. Things have changed. Camp 4 is now called Sunnyside Campground by the Park Service. . . . Most climbers still proudly call it Camp 4.

The early bouldering history of Yosemite is the most poorly recorded part of Yosemite climbing history. Up through the 1950s, bouldering in Yosemite was confined to the rocks in Camp 4 A few [bouldering achievements], however, were not forgotten. On his first trip to the Valley, Royal Robbins was eager to test himself against the Northern Californians. "We didn't know any of the Northern California climbers," Robbins says, "but they had a reputation--they'd climbed Sentinel Rock and Lost Arrow Spire. They were, how do you say it, *presences*." What better way to test himself than to tackle the local bouldering testpiece. "The big challenge that people pointed out at that time [1952] was the *Steck Overhang* (5.10+)." Robbins conquered this route on the northwest corner of Columbia Boulder, then became a "presence" too, as America's most noted rock climber of the 1950s and 1960s.

Robbins established his own testpiece on Columbia boulder, the *Robbins Eliminate*. Robbins' skill was held in high regard, and this problem reinforced that. It foiled all who tried it until Harry Daley, a climber not known for his bouldering prowess, repeated it . . .

Though Robbins had the big reputation, he and others from the same era give the nod to Chuck Pratt as being the best free climber of the time. "Royal and Pratt both were tremendous boulderers," says Pat Ament. "Pratt was bouldering at the highest standard of anyone in Yosemite way before Royal." One night Pratt left the campfire and climbed up the lichen face right of the chopped holds on the west face of Columbia Boulder, a route involving off-the-deck 5.10 slab moves. Curious as to its difficulty, Ament tried it one day. "I wanted to see what it was like, and it was so dangerous, you could slip off it so easily, that it boggled the mind."

. . . Hard bouldering mantels remained a Yosemite trademark throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Ament added some of his own desperate pressing problems, as did Dale Bard. Currently, manteling is out of fashion in the bouldering world.

. . . Ament made many pilgrimages to Yosemite in the 1960s. In addition to some hard mantels, he added the standard-pushing *Ament Arete* (B1+) and some slab problems desperate today even with sticky rubber. He also introduced chalk to Yosemite. He treated bouldering as an end in itself, a view few Valley locals shared, obsessed as they were with the big walls. One local who shared Ament's views on bouldering was Barry Bates. Ament says, "Among all the climbers I bouldered with out there, Barry Bates was a step above the rest of them"

. . . Though equally desperate problems existed elsewhere in the Valley, the *Bates Problem* (B1), in the middle of Columbia Boulders's north face, was the most visible and opened the door for the next generation of Yosemite boulderers. Bates often climbed up and down this steep and necky testpiece while few others could even go up, so it ended up with his name.

. . . Mike Graham, Dale Bard, John Long, and particularly John Bachar and Ron Kauk dominated the scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s. "Kauk and I thought bouldering was one of the greatest things," Bachar says. Together they put up the lion's share of Valley testpieces . . . Both were naming problems after Jimi Hendrix songs, so the history of who did what is somewhat muddled, but the history of one Hendrix-inspired problem is clear--*Midnight Lightning*.

. . . Finally, on what promised to be another heel-bruising day of attempts and failures, [on *Midnight Lightning*] Kauk was again at the lip. The crowd figured he'd jump off for sure, but instead he rocked over his right foot while popping a quick mantel with his left arm. He grabbed the finishing jug and the crowd fell into a shocked silence. Eventually Bachar succeeded, rocking over the lip in much the same funky mantel way that Kauk had done it. For years the show went on, drawing large audiences who spread the word of this incredible problem that nobody else could do.

. . . *Midnight Lightning* (B2) would go on to become the world's most famous boulder problem . . . But most important was its highly visible location, smack dab in the middle of America's most notorious climbers' camp. Nearly every climber who has journeyed to Yosemite has stared at its commanding position on the giant Columbia Boulder. Not only is it America's most famous problem, but also the most tried and most failed on . . .

Appropriately, *Midnight Lightning* has the most famous hold in the world Other than *Midnight Lightning* and the aforementioned problems, these are the classic Camp 4 ticks: *Initial Friction* (5.11-), *Blue Suede Shoes* (B1); and *Elegant Gypsy* (B2) for slabs and less than vertical face; *The Kor Problem* (5.11+), *Cocaine Corner* (B1) and *Shiver Me Timbers* (B1+) for bad landing mind control problems; *Bachar Cracker* (B1) for hand and finger jamming through a roof; *Battle of the Bulge* (B1+) and *Tendons Give* (B1+) for overhanging face; and for difficult beyond *Midnight Lightning* there are *King Cobra* (7b+), *Thriller* (B2+), and *The Dominator* (8a+). . . . Climbed on terribly sloping holds, it [*The Dominator*] is currently Yosemite's hardest boulder problem and went months without a repeat. Brit Jerry Moffat did the first ascent. In the last 12 years Moffat has repeatedly visited the United States and is the only European to have left more than a passing mark on United States bouldering

For the beginning to intermediate boulderer, there are good problems near Swan Slab (at the northern end of the Camp 4 boulder belt), on Sentinel Boulder's smaller satellites, and across the road from the Housekeeper Camp. These areas lack the intense atmosphere sometimes present at the more famous Camp 4 boulders. (Sherman, Stone Crusade, pp.102-110)

Yosemite Valley is the center of big wall climbing; though the world of bouldering is more diffuse, the Valley and Camp 4 are nonetheless a mecca for practitioners of this hugely popular sport. *Midnight Lightning* is unquestionably the most famous boulder problem in the world-- history was made when it was climbed--and it is smack in the middle of Camp 4.

3. The Historical Significance of Yosemite Valley Climbing

The term "history" has subtle meanings. A personal recordation may be a part of history, but may not have made a significant contribution to the "broad patterns of our history." Interesting past events may be considered "history" in the larger sense even if the participants did not think to record them. How do we judge whether a "history," or a "historic context," once established, is connected to the broader patterns of our experience?

Some generalizations might be helpful. The fact that the participants did record an event suggests that the event was considered significant by the participants. If such a record (prepared by the participants) is read, repeated and reflected upon by those not involved, we feel safe in concluding that the participants and the event reverberate with a larger historical meaning. If the circle of people reflecting on and revisiting the past event is a wide one, we know that the historical reverberation of the event may have more than just a local or regional significance. If much time has passed since the event occurred, and it still seems significant from our present vantage point, we know that our common-sense notion of what "history" is attaches to both the event and the participants. Finally, we know that an event is historic in the most profound sense if it is not only reflected on and repeated, but mythologized and used by the living to shape their own lives.

3.1 The Local, Regional and National Historical Perspective on the Valley Climbs

We submit that the events in the climbing history connected to Yosemite Valley and to Camp 4 are, when used against these tests of significance, "historic" in the profoundest and deepest sense, and that the American men and women associated with them are ipso facto "persons significant in our past."

Tom Frost and Pat Ament were participants in many of the events now written about by the recorders of climbing

history. In *Camp 4*, Steve Roper describes the activities of Frost, Ament, and the other climbers who were in Camp 4 and Yosemite Valley after the Second World War. Roper was both a participant in and a historian of these events, and in his book, published four decades after the events occurred, he categorizes the climbing ascents as world-class achievements.

The historical events referred to by Roper are treated with equal reverence and respect, decades after the climbs occurred, by two important *non-participants*. The standard guidebook to climbs in the Yosemite Valley, published by George Meyers and Don Reed, reaches the same conclusion as Roper and accords world significance to the post-World War II climbing achievements in the Valley, (see George Meyers and Don Reid, *Yosemite Climbs*, [Denver: Chockstone Press, 1987]). The history chapter from this guidebook is extracted and attached hereto as Exhibit 14.

For a national perspective it is worth noting that the two major mountaineering magazines in the United States, *Rock & Ice*, (total circulation, 40,000 bi-monthly), and *Climbing* magazine, (total circulation, 48,000 monthly), both treat Yosemite Valley climbing with the same respect. *Rock & Ice* ran a series in June and August of 1997 that reviewed a century of American climbing. (Copies are attached hereto as Exhibits 15 and 16.) The series celebrates Yosemite Valley climbs beginning with the April 1934 ascent of Higher Spire. Some points relevant to establishing historic significance are excerpted:

California climbers [from the 1930s], unafraid to experiment with new techniques and creative gear, dominate the upward movement of the climbing scene. (*Rock & Ice*, Vol. 79, p. 53)

. . . Salathé's tenure in the Valley produces the three most difficult climbs of the [early post World War II] era and opens the doors to the conquest of the big walls. (ibid., Vol. 79, p. 53)

. . . [The post-World War II attempt on Yosemite Valley's Lost Arrow feature] is an undertaking that involves multiple failures, innovations in gear and a determination previously unrealized in American rock climbing The five-day climb is unlike anything climbers have previously attempted. (ibid., Vol. 79, p. 54)

. . . [John Salathé leaves] behind a trio of routes with reputations that grow to *mythic* proportions. (ibid., Vol. 79, p.55, emphasis added).

. . . [Harding, Robbins, Galwas, and Wilson all fail in their attempts to climb Half Dome, but their] competition jettisons American climbing onto the *world stage*. (ibid., Vol. 79, p. 56, emphasis added)

. . . The late '50s to the early '70s defines the golden age of rock climbing in America. In Yosemite, . . . most of the classic lines are done. During this period, American rock climbing, both in aiding the big walls and in free climbing, catches up with and *surpasses the rest of the world*. (ibid., Vol. 80, p. 72, emphasis added)

. . . In Yosemite, and perhaps the world, no feature is as monolithic as the Nose of El Capitan . . . [Warren] Harding believes the Nose will be the world's greatest rock climb. [On November 1, 1958, more than a year (and many failed attempts) later, Harding completes the first successful climb of El Capitan.] (ibid., Vol. 80, p. 74)

... [Sixties climber Frank Sacherer] free-climbed routes in a day that [the best climbers of the day] said could not be climbed in a day. In a word, Frank Sacherer was a visionary. He did more to advance free climbing as we know it today than any other single person in America at that time. (internationally known climber Jim Bridwell, quoted in *Rock & Ice*, Vol. 80, p. 77)

Duane Raleigh, publisher and editor-in-chief of *Climbing* magazine, shares the view of his counterparts at *Rock & Ice*. In Raleigh's statement, submitted for the Register (see Exhibit 17), he notes the following regarding the climbs in the valley:

These climbs set the world standard for rock climbing, and pave the way for modern high-altitude alpine climbing in Himalaya. Also significant--camming devices--the greatest single improvement in climbing safety improvement--were invented specifically for the parallel-sided cracks that abound around Camp 4." (Exhibit 17)

But perhaps the most important evidence of the national significance of the Valley climbing tradition comes from the testimony of those climbers whose lives were altered and shaped by the accomplishment and writings of the Valley climbers who preceded them. David Brower reports in his statement submitted to the American Alpine Club that his life in the mountains was shaped by his readings of Clarence King and John Muir (see Exhibit 12, p. 3, lines 11-15). The carabeneers and nylon ropes developed by David Brower and the other climbers who participated in the development of the Tenth Mountain Division during World War II allowed the American climbers of the post-war era to push the edge of climbing still further. Salathé's climbs after the war established that the longer, more difficult Valley formations could be climbed through the use of new rope techniques, aid, and determination. Harding, Robbins, Chouinard, Pratt, Frost and others built on Salathé's efforts and established new techniques and equipment that made the possible ascent of the previously unclimbable El Capitan and Half Dome.

Almost forty years later, Paul Piana and Randy Vogel pushed climbing limits even further: they climbed the Salathé Wall, (pioneered by Frost, Robbins, and Pratt and named by them after their hero from the past) without using aid devices to ascend.⁸ As Royal Robbins states in his forward to Piana's book, "no one *dreamed* of freeing these routes until years after the original ascents" (quoted in Piana, *Big Walls*, p. xiv). Piana tells the story of this historic breakthrough on the Salathé Wall in his new book, *Big Walls: Breakthroughs on the Free-Climbing Frontier* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Book, 1998) (see Exhibit 18). But Piana makes it clear that the accomplishments of the climbers from the past (such as Robbins) shaped his own achievement:

I had studied and almost worshiped the exploits and achievements of the aid and free climbers who shaped my dreams. I had never met those great climbers who came before, the influences whom Galen Rowell calls "phantom mentors." These teachers weren't there to inspire me in person, but did so by their writings, innovative climbing skills, and belief in their personal vision. (Piana, *Big Walls*, p.36)

What better testament to the historic significance of Yosemite Valley climbing?

In summary, it can hardly be disputed that the climbing tradition in the Valley, and the big wall achievements starting after the Second World War, "made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history" and that the great climbers who participated in that history are, ipso facto, "persons significant in our past." (36 C.F.R. 60.4 (a)(b)). At the very least, these climbing achievements are of exceptional local, regional, and national historic importance.

3.2. An International Perspective on the Historical Significance of the Yosemite Valley Climbing Tradition Since the Second World War

The climbing events in the Valley unquestionably qualify as locally, regionally, and nationally significant. But even this is an understatement. The post-war accomplishments in Yosemite Valley made these American climbers, for one moment in time, the greatest climbers in the world. While they lived in and worked out of Camp 4 in the post-war years, they accomplished feats that put both them, and the Valley, on the world mountaineering stage forever. What is the evidence of this claim? What follows is only a small sample of the international recognition given to the Yosemite Valley and the Americans who climbed there.

Attached hereto as Exhibits 19 and 20 are the October-December 1987 and January-February 1998 editions of the prestigious French mountaineering magazine, *Vertical*. The former edition devotes seventeen pages of text and photographs exclusively to the American accomplishments in Yosemite Valley during the fifties and sixties. Full-page photographs of post-war Valley climbers Royal Robbins, Tom Frost, Chuck Pratt, and Jim Bridwell are included. It is a sign of the respect with which the French mountaineering community holds the post-war Yosemite Valley climbers that *Vertical* offers its readers lengthy interviews with Yvon Chouinard, Chuck Pratt, Steve Roper and Dale Bard (see Exhibit 19, pp. 47-50).

The January-February, 1998, edition of *Vertical* again celebrates great Valley climbs with 23 pages of exquisite color photography, text, and route description. *Vertical* calls Steve Roper's book *Camp 4* required reading for anyone planning to visit the Valley-- further evidence of the high regard the French climbing community has for the American Valley climbers (Exhibit 20, pp. 76-77).

Moreover, Roper's book was translated into French and was published with accompanying photographic prints that turn the American trade version into an art book (a copy is enclosed for your review). The book was also translated into Czech in 1997 (see extract from the Czech edition, attached hereto as Exhibit 21).

Mountaineers in the United Kingdom, another country with a rich climbing tradition, also venerate the Valley and the American climbers. Bernard Newman, editor of the British mountaineering magazine, *Climber*, gives the following perspective:

For well over 35 years, the Yosemite Valley has been at the forefront of world rock climbing. New standards of technical excellence have been set in the Valley on several occasions and climbers travel from all over the world to climb in the unique environment. In fact, the "Valley" is synonymous for Yosemite in international climbing jargon. Few issues of mountaineering magazines go by without an article on climbing in Yosemite. Indeed, a recent issue of my own title carried an article about big wall climbing gear centered on a trip to the Yosemite Valley. (see Exhibit 22)

Another view is offered by Ken Wilson, the British publisher of mountaineering books and occasional editor of the international climber's magazine *Mountain*. Wilson concludes that

Yosemite climbing had a revolutionary impact on world climbing during the 1960s and 1970s and it was my privilege to report this in *Mountain*. We ran numerous articles and interviews concerning Yosemite and its great pioneers (Robbins, Pratt, Chouinard, Frost, Steck, Bridwell, Bachar, etc. . . .) Recently I published *Rocks Around the World* by the German ace Stefan Galowacz (with its inspirational coverage of the Salathé Wall) and *Deep Play* by the British expert Paul Pritchard. This covered Yosemite climbing but more importantly it dealt with Yosemite-influenced climbs in Patagonia and Bathian Island . . .

Looking back, it is now clear that Yosemite climbing has had a profound influence on climbing worldwide during the last thirty years. It got off to an excellent start under the leadership of Salathé and then Robbins and his group, and has remained highly ethical and influential ever since. The critical moment was when Chouinard and Frost . . . introduced and popularized their range of nuts to the U.S. market. *These enabled cracks to be aided without hammering* and at a stroke, climbers were able to develop the sport *without damaging* the cliffs. This was in the great conservation tradition

set by *John Muir* and it has had a profound influence on American and world climbing. (Emphasis added)

... Yosemite contains the bulk of the biggest and hardest big wall climbs in the world, the others being generally located in far away places with hostile climates.

... Climbing is not an activity that is blazoned on T.V. or newspapers. Like ocean sailing, it is a challenging, discreet, and all-absorbing sport. It began in the Alps in the last century and has developed throughout the world ever since. America has played an increasingly important role in this sport, firstly to the exploration of the mountains of Alaska, but during the last 40 years by the great growth of technical rock climbing. In Yosemite, it found the ideal location for climbing to make one of its periodic 'great leaps forward' and Yosemite's importance remains immense today. Its exploration and development is one of the great chapters of world climbing history (see statement of Ken Wilson attached hereto as Exhibit 23).

Dr. Peter Grauss, President of the Austrian Alpine Club, in a letter to the American Alpine Club, makes the following statement: "The Austrian Alpine Club representing 250,000 members fully supports the American Alpine Club in its actions to reserve the status of Camp 4 and the freedom of access for climbing in *one of the world's* most famous and *best climbing areas*." (Exhibit 24, emphasis added)

Perhaps no one is better able to assess the international significance of the Yosemite Valley climbing tradition than Ian McNaught-Davis, the president of the Union Internationale Des Associations D'Alpinisme (UIAA). This association was founded in 1932 and represents 2.5 million mountaineers and climbers, worldwide, on international issues. It is recognized by the International Olympics Committee (IOC) as the international federation representing mountaineering and climbing. The UIAA's membership includes eighty-one separate Alpine federations from seventy-one different countries. Attached hereto as Exhibit 6 is the statement of Mr. McNaught-Davis. In some highly relevant passages he states:

The big wall climbs in Yosemite are of granite with such steepness and length that even after most of the highest peaks had been climbed, no one had developed techniques to solve the problems of living for days on a vertical or overhanging face. How to haul quantities of equipment, food and water needed for survival, how to find protection against falling whilst climbing holdless, smooth cracks and diamond hard rock and the ability to overcome the daunting psychological experience. As many once believed that the world is flat, many climbers believe that these problems could not be overcome in any ethically acceptable way.

Yet they were overcome and the people who solved these problems became legends worldwide and anyone going to learn the techniques and see the newly-developed equipment came to Camp 4. It became the mecca for the hard climber; where you could find information on routes to climb, a climbing partner, borrow equipment and find encouragement for the climb ahead. There was nowhere quite like it. It was unique. The Yosemite climbers became legends, not just in the U.S.A. but wherever climbers gathered to talk of new developments. The reputations and achievements of John Salathé, Royal Robbins, Yvon Chouinard, Warren Harding, Tom Frost, Layton Kor, Alan Steck, Galen Rowell, Jim Bridwell and Lynn Hill are as well-known as the great European climbers and it is astonishing that most of them are still alive today. They had solved the problems and invented or adapted new equipment. They even created a new language. Warren Harding invented the Bat-Hook. Tom Frost christened the Bong. Chuck Wilkes created the Knife Blade. Chouinard invented the Rurp, the Realised Ultimate Reality Piton. Jumars solved the problems of sackhauling. Salathé made the first hard-steel pitons. All of these were adopted throughout the world where climbs of the highest standard were being attempted.

Not only did the climbs on the big walls in Yosemite lift the perspective of what was possible to all climbers, they also set new standards of possibilities even for much shorter climbs. This opened up climbs that previously had been considered impossible, new cliffs to explore, new techniques for security. The increase in standards can be traced back to what was happening in Camp 4 in the 1950s and 1960s.

To place Camp 4 on the National Historical Register would send a message to the 2.5 million members of the federation that are the UIAA that mountaineering and climbing have a history and we must preserve it. (Exhibit 6)

4. The ``Location," ``Setting," ``Feeling" and ``Association" of Camp 4 That Give It the Requisite Integrity Required of a Property Placed on the National Historical Register

There are approximately sixty-five thousand properties in the United States that have been placed on the Register. We venture the opinion that the majority of them have not been the subject of nationally distributed books. Surely few, if any, have been the subject of a book subsequently translated into foreign languages. We imagine that there are few written histories that take a campground as their focal point and title. Have any such histories been translated into the language of countries six thousand miles away from the campground? How about seven thousand, five hundred miles away? We venture that Steve Ropers' book, *Camp 4: Reflections of a Yosemite Rockclimber*, is the only one.

Make no mistake about whether the great climbers of America have lived in Camp 4, or have returned there. In a telephone survey conducted by the author of this supplementary application, a number of the most famous climbers in America were asked about their Camp 4 experiences. Tom Frost lived in Camp 4 in his twenties; he is now in his sixties, and stayed at Camp 4 for two months within the last year. Galen Rowell is now approximately sixty; he first lived in Camp 4 in his twenties, and has camped at or visited Camp 4 almost every year since the days of his youthful climbs. World-famous big wall climber Jim Bridwell (a campground in Patagonia is named after him) stayed at Camp 4 extensively for approximately seventeen years. World-famous climber John Bachar spent most springs, summers and autumns at Camp 4 for approximately eight years. Lynn Hill, the only woman in the world to ever successfully climb the *Midnight Lightning* problem on Columbia boulder at the center of Camp 4, spent most of her summers between 1976 and 1978 living in Camp 4. She was at Camp 4 to climb *Midnight Lightning* within the last two months. John Middendorf, age thirty-eight, one of the greatest big wall climbers of his generation, estimates having spent approximately two thousand nights camping out in the Valley and particularly in Camp 4. He was in Camp 4 within the last month. World-famous American climber Steve Schneider lived in Camp 4 through the summers of 1978 to 1981 and has been back to Camp 4 almost every year from 1982 to the present.

Is there better proof that a geographical location has the requisite integrity of ``feeling" and ``association" required for placement on the Register, than that those who have achieved international fame within the rich tradition of Yosemite climbing continue to return there decade after decade. But it is not only American climbers who understood the historical power of Camp 4. The camp is a mecca for climbers from every nation. Here are some views from the non-American climbing world:

·John Cleare, British photographer and author, in *The World Guide to Mountains and Mountaineering* (New York: Mayflower Books, 1979): ``Yosemite has become, arguably, the world's foremost rock climbing center . . . [T]he climbers camp at Sunnyside Campground [Camp 4] or bivouac on the climbs that require it" (Exhibit 25, pp. 112-113).

·Glen Tempest, writing for Australia's climbing magazine, *Rock*, states: ``Nowadays Yosemite Valley is no longer the

faraway mystical paradise where heaven-reaching walls could only be mentally ascended in grubby pages of second-hand mountain magazines . . . Each year sees an increasing number of Australians rolling into Camp 4, brains twisted by cultural shock, bodies destroyed by jet lag and eyes boggling from Valley grandeur . . . (Exhibit 26, page 10)

·The German magazine *Rotpunkt* (Red Point) in its March-April 1991 issue on the United States tells the young Germans where to stay: ``Camping: Die platze im Tal darunter das beruhnte Camp IV, Sunnyside Campground, imer noch billig. Im sommer oftaushebuht wie auch die anderen . . . [Translation: The campsites in the Valley, including the famous Sunnyside (Camp 4) Campground are still inexpensive. In the summer they are fully booked, just like the others . . .] (Exhibit 27)

·Yves Peysson is the president of the prestigious French mountaineering organization *Groupe de Haute Montagne*. He writes: ``even from France, Camp IV is considered a unique place. The large editorial success of the french version of the worldwide known book dedicated to Camp 4 in Yosemite, which was recently translated, fully supports this point of view. (Exhibit 28)

·In the French magazine *Vertical* (January-February 1998) a map is provided specifically showing climbers how to get to Camp 4. (Exhibit 18)

·Rodrigo Jordan, a former board member of the Chilean Mountain Federation, and the Olympic Chilean Committee, Marcelo Grifferos, a board member of the Universidad Catolica Mountaineering Club, and Aldo Boitano, a board member of Chile's DAV (the latter two clubs being the most important mountaineering clubs in Chile), write in support of the efforts of the Alpine Club: ``to preserve the unique piece of mountaineering world's history that Camp IV represents. All of us who stay there and the ones that are planning to go there from Chile can do nothing else but to give you our support on preserving Camp IV future." Camp 4 is special to them because of its ``place in big granite wall climbing [and] its unique history." (Exhibit 30)

Why does Camp 4 continue to draw climbers, both experienced and novice, year after year, generation after generation, from all over the world? Geography and location are part of the answer. Yosemite Valley, through the efforts of those who lived at Camp 4, is the world rock climbing center. Camp 4 is ideally located within it. The Valley is approximately seven miles long and three miles wide. The great walls face both north and south. Camp 4 is located in the middle of the Valley along its northern rim. If there is sun in the morning, it will reach here first. Since the climbers sleep outside, warmth in the morning is more significant than one might imagine. The great walls of the Valley are intimidating to those who have been on them many times; they are even more intimidating to those who come to climb them for the first time. Just to the east of Camp 4 lies Swan Slab. It is one of the very few practice cliffs in the entire Valley that allows people to make relatively easy climbs before they move on to greater efforts. The shapes and features of this slab, and its relatively low height, also make it useful for people just learning to climb. For years the slab has been used by the Yosemite Mountaineering School to teach beginning climbers (see Exhibit 31 for a photograph of a beginning climbing class at Swan Slab).

Look up from Camp 4 to just outside of the perimeter, and you will see some of the great vistas to the south and east. Half Dome, for example, rises in its magnificence and reminds you that there are stations along the journey to El Cap and that it might be best to try Half Dome first. (See Exhibit 32). Then there are the magnificent boulders in the center of the campground, along its perimeter, and in the adjacent Swan Slab Meadow. Those boulders contain history lessons for anyone who uses the campground: the names of the great climbers of the past are embedded in the oral tradition that exists here. If you go to Camp 4, you will be asked whether you can do the boulder climbs named after Royal Robbins,

Yvon Chouinard, John Bachar, John Bridwell, Ron Kauk, Layton Kor, Pat Ament, and so on.

That oral tradition is part of what gives Camp 4 such a strong sense of community. Duane Raleigh, a publisher and editor-in-chief of *Climbing* talks of this community:

Camp 4 has, since David Brower's first ascent of Sunnyside Bench in 1935, been the proving ground for rock climbing--virtually every advancement in equipment, technique and philosophy had its genesis in Camp 4. Among the highlights, Camp 4 was the launching point for virtually every major first ascent in the park . . . also significant, camming devices--the greatest single improvement in climbing safety--were invented specifically for the parallel-sided cracks that abound around Camp 4.

More importantly, though, is the historical cultural aspect that abounds in Camp 4. . . . For the past fifty years Camp 4 has been the melting pot for climbing. Climbers from around the world over have traveled and camped here to exchange ideas, news, and form partnerships with American climbers. As Camp 4 is the only place in America, its loss would be a devastating blow and undermine America's reputation as the world leader in rock climbing.

Personally, I began climbing in Yosemite in 1980. As a twenty-year old fresh from Oklahoma, the cultural and historical aspect of Camp 4 left a deep and lasting impression upon me. So much so that I left there compelled to pursue a career in climbing journalism. Even today, my identity as a climber depends on the events in and around Camp 4. (see Exhibit 17)

British publisher and mountaineering writer Ken Wilson has a similar view of the sense of community Camp 4 has engendered:

These developments [the great climbs in Yosemite Valley] took place because, apart from climbing, the centralised nature of Yosemite climbing social life had a natural focal point and meeting place in Camp 4. Here climbers from every major climbing nation of the world met and exchanged ideas and advice. They came to tackle the great wall routes of El Capitan and Half Dome, but they brought with them overseas know-how and perspectives that proved equally influential for American climbers. *Apart from Chamonix, and now, maybe, the main meeting points in the Karakorim, there is no other international meeting place to rival Yosemite.* [emphasis added]

Yosemite is the world's leading center for big wall climbing. The skills needed are very specialized. They can only be learned by years of practice and with informed local advice. This is best done on the crag and with the logistical training and know-how passed on in Camp 4. This is why Camp 4 is of such critical importance.

And, Ian-McNaught Davis, president of the UIAA, adds:

Whilst on the surface Camp 4 can be seen as simply a field and some trees, to climbers wherever they are it is much more than that. It is where a climber knows he can find people with the same passion. It is where issues of concern to climbers can be openly discussed without the formality of an organized debate. Ethical issues such as fixed equipment on mountains . . . the quality of new equipment on which one's life may depend and many others. On my own early visit there I met with many of the American legends. I had never before met an American climber and they didn't know me yet I climbed with Jim Bridwell and Royal Robbins as if we had known each other for years. There is no other place in the world quite like Camp 4. If a Cathedral is simply a pile of stones and Camp 4 only a field, then there is no understanding of what either of these mean to the people that are deeply involved.

To place Camp 4 on the National Historical Register would send a message to the 2.5 million members of the federations that are the UIAA that mountaineering and climbing have a history and that we must preserve it.

But one senses, even in the words of Raleigh, Wilson and McNaught-Davis, that the explanation for Camp 4's relevance may be more complex; that beyond Camp 4's geography, location, and sense of community, there is something else that has long attracted climbers: something that is related to the physical features of the camp and the community that climbers find there, but that is less tangible, more abstract, and perhaps even mystical. Dr. Kevin Starr, the California State Librarian, former Yosemite Lodge employee and author of numerous books on California's cultural history (published through Oxford University Press), intimates this "something else":

From there you have a place that is intensely, made intensely imaginative and significant by what happened there. But back behind that assault [Warren Harding's ascent of El Capitan] you have a whole story of mountaineering in California.

In other words, Camp 4 is important for what happened in terms of El Capitan but it is also important as a localization, a physical localization of an entire mountaineering history, in my opinion, of California. And that mountaineering history is just not something peripheral in terms of the nineteenth century; it is one of the most profound ways that Californians encountered and found for themselves what California was all about . . . (Exhibit 9, pp. 5-6)

Camp 4, Starr asserts:

is a place wherein the entire identity of California was consolidated, partially consolidated, in the 1940s, 1950s, and that consolidation is linked to the whole epic or spiritual quest, imaginative quest through mountaineering in the nineteenth century. (Ibid., pp. 45-46)

The reason a physical location emanates a specialness and evokes the "feelings and associations" of history, is elusive. How did Camp 4 come to reverberate in the way it does? Starr offers:

[A]ll these climbs transmuted into great literature [which] become part of the canon of American literature and part of the California canon of what California defines itself against and becomes also the reverberations that come in and out of Camp 4 in a place in direct line of all that nineteenth century quest because it took it up to the 1950s and to today. If that is not historic, if [it] is not historic in California, what is then? (Ibid., p. 23, 24)

Dr. Starr further explains the mystery of why certain places--those places where history has "come to rest"--seem to literally embody history:

I go up to Weaverville in Trinity County [California] and I encounter the great Josse house [a place used by the California Chinese community for worship and meetings] there that survived from the 1850s that is now a state park, in that Josse house encounter I have a window on to what Henry Adams called 'reverberations.' I had the reverberations of the entire Chinese experience in California in the late 1850s and 60s, the ethic of labor that constructed the great continental railroad. If I go to Camp 4 where that mountaineering tradition [of the nineteenth century] came to rest--or

not to rest; it was active and remained vital to the present--then I have a window in that place. I have a window onto the whole mountaineering history of the nineteenth century. . . (Exhibit 9, page 43, lines 9-24).

Dr. Starr concludes, in response to the question of whether Camp 4 should be put on the National Historical Register, with an unequivocal: "Absolutely" (Starr, Exhibit 9, p. 45, lines 17-21).

In summary, American climbers attached the Yosemite climbing tradition to Camp 4 over half a century ago when by choosing it as their Valley base camp of choice " . . . since the end of World War II." (See Report of Harlan D. Unrau, p. 5). That campground has achieved *exceptional importance* within the meaning of Bulletin 15 to the entire mountaineering world.

5. A Critique of the "Evaluation of Historical Significance and Integrity of Sunnyside Campground, Yosemite Valley, Yosemite National Park, California," (Evaluation Prepared by Harlan D. Unrau and Dated June 6, 1997)

The question of whether Camp 4 should be placed on the National Historical Register must be decided by an objective review, with information provided to the Keeper of the Register by all interested parties. However, the report prepared by Harlan D. Unrau of the National Park Service on the question of Camp 4 registration has so many errors and omissions that it seems important to comment on it, lest it cast a distorting shadow on the submissions prepared by members of the climbing community.

The National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 et. seq.) and its implementing regulations (40 C.F.R. 1500 et. seq.) require the National Park Service (hereinafter "NPS") to weigh carefully whether any major construction projects under consideration might "significantly affect" the environment. As part of that pre-construction consideration, the NPS must consider whether a potential project might "adversely affect sites . . . structures or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Historical Register of Historic Places, or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources." (40 C.F.R. 1508.25)

When considered in light of this federal regulatory mandate, the timing and content of Mr. Unrau's report are curious. In April of 1997, the NPS announced its plan to proceed with a massive construction project, immediately adjacent to Camp 4 on the camp's east side. Indeed, a portion of Camp 4 was to be abolished. Two months *after* the NPS committed to this project, NPS employee Harlan Unrau was assigned the task of determining the eligibility of Camp 4 for the Register. Unrau toured the property on May 29, 1997. On June 6, he reported that the property was not eligible.

Unrau seems to have deliberately missed the point. Bulletin 15 required him to at least *try* to establish the historical context within which to consider Camp 4. He does give a construction history of the campsite, but he seems to have made minimal effort to determine what, if anything, of historical significance occurred that might provide a context for evaluating the site. He correctly concludes that climbers have been staying in Camp 4 for more than fifty years, when he notes that "climbers had stayed in Camp 4 since the end of World War II" (Unrau's report, p.5). He also notes that "the camp came to be understood as the 'climbers' campground'" (ibid., p.4). But Unrau does not even attempt to determine whether the activities of those climbers had any historical significance; nor does he attempt to place the climbers within a larger historical framework.

One sentence suggests the possibility that a significant historical context did occur to Mr. Unrau. "During the early post-World War II years," Unrau writes, "rock climbing in Yosemite Valley slowly developed into a popular recreational activity and ultimately into a sport" (ibid., p.4). But Unrau fails to follow this statement through to its possible implication: if the statement were accurate (it is not), Camp 4 might be historically significant as the place where a sport actually came into being.

Nor does Mr. Unrau consider the possibility that climbing is *more* than a popular post- World War II recreational activity, or that it has deeper roots in the Yosemite Valley. He assumes it doesn't.

Is there any literature or scholarship that might have helped Mr. Unrau learn more about Camp 4? He did consult Steve Roper's book, *Camp 4: Recollections of a Yosemite Rockclimber* (Seattle: Mountaineers, 1994). Unrau also cites Gary Arce's *Define Gravity: High Adventure on Yosemite Walls* (Berkeley, California: Wilderness Press, 1996), and he refers to an article from *The Vertical World of Yosemite: A Collection of Writings and Photographs on Rock Climbing in Yosemite*, edited by Galen A. Rowell (Berkeley, California: Wilderness Press, 1974). These books contain extensive materials on both the antecedents of rock climbing in Yosemite Valley and the historical accomplishments of the Valley climbers.⁹ You wouldn't know that, however, from reading Mr. Unrau's report.

Roper's lengthy historical account of climbing in Yosemite Valley is sifted through by Mr. Unrau for the exclusive purpose of finding potentially derogatory comments about the lifestyle of the climbers. For example, Unrau reports that climbers' campsites were "wretched" because they were "strewn with equipment, etc." (Unrau's report, p. 5). He reports that climbers were "hedonistic and bohemian." Gary Arce's book is quoted only to say that most climbers were "beatniks" or, at best, were "dumped by impatient girlfriends" (ibid., p.7).¹⁰ Mr. Unrau had to know that he was including in his report lifestyle evaluations that had no relevancy under either 36 C.F.R. 60.4 or Bulletin 15. His inclusion of the remarks suggests either that he had a personal bias, making him the wrong evaluator for this task, or that he had an agenda he did not reveal when writing his report.

Kevin Worrall's article from *Climbing* magazine gets much the same treatment by Unrau as the aforementioned books. Worrall writes of a golden age of climbing that he was part of at Camp 4; he also discusses some changes that occurred as the NPS reduced the part of Camp 4 that can be used for camping, and he celebrates the efforts of two British climbers who traveled six thousand miles in 1994 solely to climb the world-famous boulders in Camp 4. Unrau reports on the changes at Camp 4, but he ignores both the historical information provided by Worrall, and the significance of the central story of the world-class British climbers coming to Camp 4. In short, Unrau extracts the material he feels supports his conclusions, and ignores the information that contradicts it.

Unrau must have known that Bulletin 15 clearly defines both a campsite and a natural rock formation as a *site* rather than a building or structure. When evaluating a site, what has happened to the building or structures on the site is irrelevant. The buildings or structures may be "standing, ruined or vanished" (Bulletin 15, p.5). The important consideration is whether "the location itself possesses historic, [or] cultural . . . value . . . regardless of the value of any existing structure" (ibid., p. 5). Surely he knew that the date of construction of fire pits, bathrooms, or cement berms, had nothing to do with whether Camp 4 had the "requisite integrity" within the meaning of Bulletin 15.

A key question would have been whether the site was sufficiently intact to give a feeling of the "aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time." Another relevant question would have been whether there is sufficient "association" between the site and historically important events or persons. (See Bulletin 15, pp. 44-45). Unrau ignores these questions. He acknowledges that Camp 4 is where it always was, although the portion available for camping¹¹ is somewhat smaller than it used to be. He knows that the famous rock formations in the campsite are still there and that many of the formations actually contain the names of--and indeed are named for--some significant men associated with Camp 4 (Pratt, Bachar, Bridwell, etc.). And yet, instead of applying the criteria applicable to a site, Unrau treats Camp 4 as if it were a building or structure, and he irrelevantly concludes that Camp 4 does not "represent the work of a master craftsman or possess high artistic value" (Unrau's report, p.11).

Unrau also seems to be unaware of the fact that his conclusions about the dates in which bathrooms, berms, etc. were built, might be irrelevant even if the *integrity* of Camp 4 was somehow tied to those objects, buildings and structures, if Camp 4 was a place of "exceptional importance" within the meaning of 36 C.F.R. 60.4(g), (see also Bulletin 15, pp. 41-42). Perhaps he ignored this salient point because he didn't think anything of any importance ever happened at Camp 4.

In summary, one comes away from Mr. Unrau's report not understanding much of anything about Camp 4. What is the historical context within which to evaluate the camp? Does climbing have any historical antecedents that render the events that occurred there important? If so, what are they? Does climbing have any significance in local, regional, state,

or national history? If so, what is it? Was there a climbing tradition associated with Yosemite Valley that preceded the development of climbing as a popular recreational activity after the Second World War? If so, what was it? Were there climbers associated with Camp 4 who achieved local, regional, or national prominence for either their climbing achievements or other activities that grew out of their mountain experiences? If Camp 4 is in fact a site, rather than a building, does it have the "integrity" required of a site in order for it to be placed on the National Historical Register?

Mr. Unrau has failed to grapple with any of these questions, although it would have been easy to answer many of them. Gary Colliver, the ranger Unrau listed as escorting him to Camp 4, was himself a climber and knows an enormous amount about the history of the camp. The nearby bookstores at the Yosemite Mountaineering Store and at the Ahwahnee Lodge are filled with articles and scholarship relating to Yosemite Valley climbing and Camp 4. The climbers who fill Camp 4 each May and June could have told him what he needed to know. He apparently didn't ask.

The application of Tom Frost and Pat Ament, and this supplementary application, seek to correct the deficiencies in Mr. Unrau's report.

Conclusion:

There are historic places throughout the United States that few visit, despite either the plaques that mark their location or governmental efforts to educate the public regarding their importance. Camp 4 is not one of them. No plaque marks its location. No tourist bureau or public agency touts it. Yet, the people come. They come year after year, decade after decade. One generation replaces another in the pilgrimage. They come from states as far away as Alaska and New York; from countries as far away as China and the Czech Republic. They repeat the historical rituals of the past: climbing on the ancient boulders, gathering around campfires with new climbing partners, preparing to climb the old routes, and dreaming about creating the future. This is not history as a dust bin. It is history as a force that shapes a living, vibrant present.

Camp 4 is such a simple setting: forested space, boulders, campsites, sun in the morning, views across the Valley, closeness to the easy Swan's Slab, and closeness to the ever challenging El Capitan. The simplicity itself is part of Camp 4's evocative force. Climbers, by their very nature, seek a direct, intense interaction with nature. For them, the sparseness of the campground is far more evocative than any of the more luxurious lodgings available in the Valley.

While simplicity matters, it alone would not produce the deep feelings that Camp 4 evokes. In the opinion of this supplementary application's author, it was Steve Roper, in his book *Camp 4*, who best captured how and why Camp 4 reverberates with historic feelings and associations. He, therefore, should have the last word. In talking about the young Americans who first came to Camp 4 after World War II, and who turned it into the center of world rock climbing, Roper said:

These . . . rebellious eccentrics . . . were the most gifted rock climbers in the world, and I hope I evoked their spirit and their times. (Roper, *Camp 4*, p. 15)

He is right. They were. Go to Camp 4 and you will feel their presence. Like Roper, I hope that I have also evoked their spirit and their times.

Dated: July 16, 1998

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA- SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION
FRIENDS OF YOSEMITE VALLEY, THE ACCESS FUND, GREG ADAIR, PAT AMENT, THE AMERICAN ALPINE
CLUB, JOHN BACHAR, FRED BECKEY, ERIC BRAND, JIM BRIDWELL, DAVID BROWER, R.D. CAUGHRON, PETER
CROFT, YVON CHOUINARD, CRAGMONT CLIMBING CLUB, ROGER DERRYBERRY, HANS FLORINE, TOM FROST,
WARREN HARDING, SIBYLLE HECHTEL, TM HERBERT, LYNN HILL, CHRIS JONES, PETER MAYFIELD, JOHN
MIDDENDORF, CHUCK PRATT, ROYAL ROBBINS, GALEN ROWELL, KIM SCHMITZ, STEVE SCHNEIDER, ALLEN
STECK and BROCK WAGSTAFF,

Plaintiffs,

v.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BRUCE BABBITT,
in his capacity as the SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, ROBERT STANTON, in his capacity as the
DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, STANLEY ALBRIGHT, in his capacity as the
SUPERINTENDENT OF YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, and DOES 1 - 100,
Defendants.

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Case No.

DECLARATION OF JOHN MIDDENDORF IN SUPPORT OF COMPLAINT
(Violations of the National Environmental Policy Act and National Park Service Organic Act)
FOR DECLARATORY AND EQUITABLE RELIEF AND ATTORNEYS FEES

I, JOHN MIDDENDORF, DECLARE:

1. My name is John Middendorf and I have loved the land we call Yosemite since I was a teenager. My credentials revolve around rock climbing. I graduated from Stanford with an Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering in 1983, which I utilized when I began a business manufacturing rock climbing equipment, A5 Adventures. In 1991 I sold A5 to The North Face, where I am currently employed as a designer.

2. I have spent as much as six years camping in Yosemite Valley. I have spent a large portion of that camping time in Camp 4. I will be going back to stay in Camp 4/Swan Slab and to use its camping facilities, open space and boulders before the end of the autumn of this year and during the climbing season (March through November) of every year to come for the foreseeable future. My first visit in 1977 changed my life, when I climbed Half Dome. I lived in Camp 4 from January 1984 to the fall of 1986 as a member of the Yosemite Search and Rescue Team ("SAR"), where I worked on many rescues with John Dill. The rescues ranged from assisting people with sprained ankles to carrying bodies ten miles from the High Sierra, and we saved many lives during that period. During those years, I honed my climbing skills on the rocks of Yosemite to the point where I was able to climb the Great Trango Tower in 1992, a fearsome rock wall in the Karakoram equivalent to El Cap and Half Dome stacked vertically.

3. Throughout the years, I have always returned to Yosemite, the place where my vertical life began.

4. Camp 4 and the area between Camp 4 and the Swan Slab cliff are magic places. In my mind they are one place. It is where climbers from all over the world meet and share their

souls. Generally, plans are formed on the spot, when one finds a partner who has a similar frame of mind, and together, going off to experience the climbs of Yosemite. The days are spent on the vertical, often down Valley on the shorter cliffs along the Merced drainage and along the rim. Evenings are spent bouldering on the finest boulders of the world around Camp 4 and the Swan Slab meadows, and in other spots on the Valley floor. Periodically, a team finds the motivation to climb one of the big cliffs of Yosemite, and can be seen in the unpaved parking lot, carefully organizing their gear on a tarp under the shade of a tree. Contributions to the Concession are marginal, mostly because climbers are a self-sufficient lot who buy groceries and cook for themselves, but occasionally a chipper morning is spent in the Lodge Cafe, drinking coffee and sharing exploits with fellow vertical travelers.

5. To give an idea of the layout in Camp 4 and in Swan Slab I walked this area, took photographs of it and prepared a map of the places of importance to climbers. The places of importance are marked by hearts. The boulders are named. The photographs are numbered and referred to on the map that I prepared so that a person can see where I am walking and get an idea of what this magic area is like.

5. The SAR members have prestige, mostly due to their permanent status--they are the lucky few who are not under the imposition of the peak-season 7-day limit. For everyone else, getting a campsite requires a morning at the Kiosk, often time well spent due to its central location and note board, where one can find climbing partners and used gear, and get an idea of who's around. When I began working rescues, I lived in site 27 with our excellent homemade gym. I took my training quite seriously, and I leaped for the chance to help with rescues. We also assisted the Park Service with other tasks that required specialized help.

6. Once, I needed a rescue myself. I was saved from a cold death on Half Dome by helicopter in 1986, and I was incredibly grateful to the NPS and proud of my teammates who had been hiking to the top of Half Dome in deep snow in case the Lemoore pilot couldn't reach us between the fierce storms (the inadequate equipment of the day became my inspiration to design more weatherproof shelters for big walls).

7. We had one run-in with the concession (then the Curry Company run by Ed Hardy). One cold and rainy night Charles Cole and I were playing chess in the Cliff Room on the Lodge complex. A hotel manager asked us to leave because we weren't hotel guests. Since every other venue was open to all, not just Lodge guests, we refused. Rangers (who we knew and had worked with) soon arrived on the scene and told the manager that we were within our rights. What resulted was a meeting at the Ahwahnee with Ed Hardy and the park Superintendent, whereupon we were granted a Concession "Privilege Card", which allowed us discounts and free showers at the WOBs. Our part of the agreement was to make sure the Rescue Team set a fine example for the rest of the climbers. We felt that we were capable of the respect that we deserved as good people of this planet.

8. Today, though I believe that climbers have maintained status quo (if anything, climbers have become more affluent and respectable), I feel a different attitude from the National Park Service. I see a direction towards making the visitor experience more accessible from the roads, and less accessible to the outlying areas for people like climbers who come to live away from their cars and away from buildings for a short time. The trend over the last decade has definitely been a dwindling number of walk-in campsites. Perhaps there is less tolerance for a group of people who may appear scruffy because they have just spent their day pushing their limits struggling up a climb and haven't had the chance to get over to Housekeeping for a shower.

9. Despite these appearances, climbers are a well-behaved lot using the lands in specific, environmentally friendly ways. Climbers as a group also contribute to the Park in other ways, exemplified by the trail and area maintenance organized by the American Alpine Club. Climbers require a place in the Valley where a basecamp for forays into the wild can be set up, and as far away as buildings as possible.

10. I have made a map of Camp 4 so that the Court can understand how it is used. I put in all of the boulders so that you can see where the climbers practice. I put in the Search and Rescue tent (SAR) because of the important history of SAR. The parking lot is not just a parking lot. Its where we gather before and after climbs to sort out our equipment and meet friends. The kiosk is not just a place to check in for camping, it has a bulletin board used by all of the climbers to leave notes for friends, find climbing partners, sell equipment or other such activities.

11. Camp 4 and Swan Slab are sacred spots to climbers. The sun is good, even in the winter months. It is a place where one can get away from the indoor life, camp with the stars and moon, and feel the pulse of nature. Swan Slab is visited daily and it is an integral part of Camp 4; without Swan Slab and the grove of trees connecting it to Camp 4, Camp 4 loses its solitude. The solitude and the ability to remain away from buildings is key to the experience. And the dirt parking lot is not just any parking lot: it is a place where climbers meet. There are many more sacred areas, such as the Leidig Meadow, where one can walk to the river or hug the magnificent Muir Tree. The new plans clearly will disrupt the current ability to roam these areas, integral to the Yosemite experience and exactly what the Park was originally set up to preserve.

12. I believe the NPS has the ability to retain the aspects with which it was originally created, and to see that the plan to develop the area directly east of Camp 4 with three-story employee dorms and the area north of Northside Drive with fourplexes is clearly both overly developmental and unfair to those who love the "Sunnyside" area.

13. The atmosphere of Camp 4/Swan Slab will be ruined by the addition of over 300 people (counting employee dorms at 226 and estimated 120 people in the 48 four-plex rooms) in the area north of Northside drive, and the buildings will sever the natural, peaceful connection between Camp 4 and Swan Slab. Visually, the magnificent views of Sentinel, Glacier Point, Yosemite Falls, and Half Dome will be marred by the new buildings.

14. The NPS and climbers have traditionally had a strong alliance since the 1950's when climbing began to get popular, and I believe that it is possible for the NPS to agree to fair negotiations with the American Alpine Club for specific rights for the people who come to Yosemite to experience the world's finest resource of granite cliffs. As Tom Frost says, we love the NPS, and want to help the NPS return to their traditional path of preservation of our country's heritage sites.

15. My involvement in opposing the Lodge DCP began when I obtained maps and figured out the difference between the written documents and the realty reality in the Lodge expansion plans. My feelings were shared by others who wrote in during the comment period. In the spring, Tom Frost, Greg Adair, and myself founded the Friends of Yosemite Valley, and we created a brochure to describe what we could best decipher as the real facts and details of the DCP. I talked to many friends who had also spent time in Camp 4, and when they became apprised of the plans, they were shocked, confirming my desire to clarify the real issue for all. I participated in a Sierra Club special meeting to discuss the issue. At the September 1997 AAC board meeting, I made a motion (which passed) for the board to oppose the construction planned for the area north of Northside Drive, and the December AAC annual meeting, I was a member of a panel on the use of Federal Lands, and I spoke out openly opposing the Lodge DCP and questioned Jerry Mitchell why the NPS appeared to be following the Concession's fondest dreams of expansion in the Lodge area. I also attended the Yosemite Open House in San Francisco (regarding the VIP), where I met Joyce Eden and talked with several rangers, including Gary Colliver. I initiated a letter writing campaign to Bruce Babbitt, Barbara Boxer, and the NPS. I have set up a web site to describe the travesty that is planned to take place, and I have contacted many climbers in the US and around the world on the issue. I also met with the NPS on April 6 along with Tom Frost, Yvon Chouinard, Jim McCarthy, Dick Duane, and others in which we presented our case elegantly, but got very little response from the NPS.

16. I can only hope that the NPS will see the folly of their plans before it is too late.

I have personal knowledge of the foregoing and if called as a witness could testify competently thereto.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.
Dated:

JOHN MIDDENDORF

Yosemite Update: Camp 4 and Swan Slabs still threatened

(published in Climbing Magazine, May, 1998)

Camp 4 and Swan Slabs are in great need of public support for their survival. In February 1997 the Park Service proposed to expand Yosemite Lodge north over Northside Drive to Swan Slab and the Columbia Boulder. Although climbers have been active lobbying to preserve the historic nature of the Camp 4 area, much work remains to be done.

Here is the basis of ongoing protests: The proposed Yosemite Lodge would expand dramatically over Northside Drive. A new multi-unit, three-story employee housing complex would cover the campground parking lot and gas station, and, sprawling south of the road, would spill well into the east end of Camp 4. In addition, eight acres of forest around Swan Slab and the Columbia Boulder would be felled and replaced with luxury-scale hotel suites and a four-acre parking lot. The new Lodge would expand in every way: larger parking and roads, vastly enlarged rooms, lodging area, and employee housing.

During an interim period (yet to be determined) Camp 4 would be "temporarily" closed. The SAR sites would be moved or eliminated. Northside Drive would be temporarily re-routed to the very base of Swan Slabs. When the dust settles after several years of construction, Camp 4 would, at best, become the back lot of the most dense and urban part of the Valley, and the remaining campground would be 20 percent smaller.

Climbers and conservationists have argued consistently through the year that any expansion over Northside Drive is unacceptable, and is a violation of the Park's General Management Plan (GMP). (The Yosemite GMP is a forward-looking document calling for the progressive restoration of the Valley and a reduction of development.) A natural alliance has formed between climbers and environmental groups in opposing the Lodge plan.

The Park Service fielded public comments on the proposed development until February 23 of this year. But aside from moving a few planned buildings and parking lots a few feet, the original plan remains essentially unchanged and still greatly compromises Camp 4 and the surrounding bouldering and climbing. Although organized opposition has grown steadily, public support for the area is still necessary.

In late summer The Friends of Yosemite Valley (FOYV) was formed by climbers and environmental activists, and has since gained hundreds of supporters.

The Access Fund has also been active in petitioning the plan. In addition, members of the American Alpine Club have submitted a proposal to place Camp 4 on the National Register of Historic Places. (This follows the discovery of the Park's own National Register "proposal," which characterizes climbers as bums, thieves, and declared the campground devoid of historic significance.)

Yosemite needs the support of resolute, principled voices, and FOYV is organizing a Congressional letter-writing campaign. For more information, contact Friends of Yosemite Valley, 1439 44th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94112, 415-566-4050.

-- Greg Adair, John Middendorf, and Tom Frost (The Friends of Yosemite Valley)

Yosemite Crisis: Hotels or Campsites?

From the earliest arrival of non-natives to Yosemite, and with alarming speed since 1945, the Incomparable Valley has been managed to make way for increasing tourism, cars, kiosks, stores, parking lots, and hotels. Urbanism resulted, a place suited to convenience, for some a resort destination, something it should never be.

By the 1970's Yosemite's crisis was obvious. Yet it was then that an expansion of environmental awareness was afoot, and activism was strong. Advocates rejected, then rejected again versions of a Master Plan which would have further abused Yosemite. From that impasse, a broad democratic process began in which 80,000 citizens and hundreds of public interest groups participated over nearly a decade to produce the General Management Plan of 1980. Its primary goals, admired by a broad majority, are:

- to remove automobiles from Yosemite Valley.
- to redirect development to the Park periphery and beyond.
- to restore the essence of wilderness in the Valley.

Still, the General Management Plan was not utopia, but a blueprint for an elected future and it outlines specific numbers for reduced amenities such as hotel rooms. It was therefore already a compromise with development. As the Sierra Club said, "It is therefore the minimum acceptable standard for further planning."

For seventeen years the 1980 G.M.P. has suffered inaction and setbacks, but none as stunning as the reversal of 1992. In that year planners released the Concession Services Plan, supposed to implement the concession portion of the 1980 G.M.P. Instead it rewrote, amended, and ignored the earlier plan. A prominent example was lodging; without justification additional units would be removed (tents and tent cabins) and replaced with full service luxury hotel rooms. The 1992 plan drew the outrage of advocates, and made a mockery of the 1980 GMP. Hearings were called for, rallies and meetings attended, and lawsuits rumored.

In that same year, 1992, the Delaware North Corporation (an Atlantic City gambling concern) was awarded Yosemite's concession contract. The Park selected Delaware North over the Yosemite Restoration Trust, a non-profit group organized by environmentalists with a plan to win the concession contract and use it to actively reverse commercialism. Since 1992, pressure towards development has increased. Recently in designated wilderness near Glacier Point, a small kiosk was replaced with a multistory commercial complex which will double in winter as overnight ski lodging starting at \$160 per night. Highway 140 is being widened for tour buses. Delaware North does not publicly advocate for upscale commercialism in Yosemite. But we believe one can read it clearly in planning documents.

The historic winter floods of 1997 resulted in Congress authorizing \$178 million for repairs in Yosemite. Almost immediately, plans to expand and redesign Yosemite Lodge appeared, and remained essentially unchanged despite letters and statements from individuals and groups. Publicity for the project was minimal; public walk-throughs were scheduled only mid-week, and very few people came to know of the proposed changes. The Lodge plans were meanwhile removed from the legally prescribed sequence in order to push along their fast approval.

What then does the Lodge Plan show? It shows:

- The new lodge will expand in every category; room size, lodging, employee housing.
- Parking lots will be bigger and roads will be expanded.

- Dozens of trees around Swan Slab will be destroyed to be filled with luxury motel suites and a parking lot.
- Camp 4 will be reduced in size, and walled in by a large scale multi-unit three story employee housing complex.
- A small area in the flood plain will be restored by removing low cost cottages. Most of the flood area will become new parking.
- The entire area was once the site of an important Ahwaneechee native villages: more traces of this great culture will be irretrievably lost to excavation and construction.

The official statement of the project suggests a major restoration of the Merced flood plain with less impact through new construction in forest areas; "5.4 acres of undeveloped but previously disturbed and moderately degraded woodland would be developed and 8.3 acres of riparian and adjacent upland would be restored." There is no evidence for this. A total of 6 acres will be restored and 17.5 acres will be developed, a net loss of 11.5 acres.. This discrepancy seems to arise from planners' counting parking lots as "restoration". A close analysis of the approved plans also shows:

- An increase in parking (4.1 acres, a 40% increase)
- An increase in new lodging footprint, despite the misleading published statement of a "reduction of 55 rooms at the Lodge in accordance with the 1992 Concession Service Plan". The reader will note the current total lodging is 155 more than approved in the 1980 G.M.P.
- A dramatic increase in individual room size: new motel rooms are 56% larger, and "cottages", the mainstay of the plan, are 143% larger (averaging 750 square feet per room).
- The new Yosemite Lodge will be bigger, more luxurious, and will increase concession profits. Currently, the most expensive rooms are \$100 per night; with the proposed plan, the least expensive rooms will be \$100 per night. All of the new development funded by public money is creating expensive lodging units at the Yosemite Lodge.

The Friends of Yosemite Valley was formed by climbers and others to oppose the expansion of Yosemite Lodge. If the Valley is ever to be restored while preserving access - and not become a gated resort with rationed admission - then camping must be emphasized over luxury accommodations. People with special needs and the elderly must certainly be respected in planning the Valley's future. But the challenge to the great majority should be to meet the Valley environment simply, on its own terms.

We believe that the Lodge Plan represents a turning point for Yosemite. The floods and the money that followed broke an impasse, and what should occur now is planning for decreased development in accordance with the General Management Plan and the public will. Sadly, we see the opposite; the Lodge expansion ignores and subverts the public goals of the GMP. The net effect of the Lodge Plan is the destruction of more than 11 acres of Yosemite in the name of luxury and private profit. The Lodge Plan is the first in a series which the flood money will fuel. Similar changes are foreseen for Camp Curry. An 1800 car parking lot is rumored for a site near El Capitan Meadow.

It is time to break this chain of events. It is time to do what has not been done and make a stand for Yosemite Valley. Please join us.

Dear Superintendent Albright: 21 Feb. 1998

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Draft Valley Implementation Plan. The Friends of Yosemite Valley was formed in 1997 with the purpose of promoting respect for and appreciation of Yosemite's natural and wild values. We support continued public access to Yosemite for low income people, the disabled, and wilderness users. We believe that hotels, food service, and commercialism should be removed in favor of camping and a self-managed natural experience of the Park. Our goals are in keeping with the public goals of the G.M.P. We believe these values are at the heart of a democratic public ideal of access and enjoyment of nature found in the Park's enabling legislation.

While we support some individual elements of the Draft VIP we do not believe that it is legally adequate in scope and analysis as developed at this time. Only the Park's primary mission of resource preservation and the public goals of restoring Yosemite valley found in the G.M.P. can serve as the measure for a plan of this breadth and importance. We believe that the VIP, as a plan intended to integrate management decisions for the entire Valley, should coordinate impact analysis and planning across that range in a single E.I.S.; the result should accord with the goals of the G.M.P. as a whole. We believe that the Draft VIP wrongly excludes plans for the Yosemite Lodge Area, Employee Housing, and the El Portal Road, and by such omissions of analysis and planning unduly constrains its range of alternatives for public comment. It is difficult to discuss the VIP in its current form since a range of changes to the east valley are predicated on the presumed failure of a regional transit system, and the proposed creation of a parking/transit facility in an undisturbed area of the west valley, a proposal which we oppose. The Draft VIP is inadequate in its current form as a public proposal for implementing the Park's G.M.P.

The positions of the Friends of Yosemite Valley on the Draft VIP are as follows:

1. Yosemite Lodge:

We do not accept plans for the Yosemite Lodge Area as developed in the Lodge D.C.P.E.A.. The Plan moves the commercial hotel and employee housing complex north of Northside Drive. This would create incompatibility with the enjoyment of the Swan Slabs Area and the historic Camp 4 campground, and is in violation of the goals of the GMP. We believe that the decision to separate Yosemite Lodge lodging and employee housing from interrelated planning for the whole Valley has led to the approval of plans which through expansion to a currently undeveloped area will harm Yosemite's natural values, and significantly restrict access of low to moderate income individuals and families and interpretive programs. The N.P.S. should withdraw plans based on the Yosemite Lodge D.C.P.E.A. from the bidding process until the VIP is approved.

Planning for the Yosemite Lodge Area should be the subject of a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Lodge planning cannot be completed in isolation from related Valley-wide parking proposals, Valley-wide changes in Employee Housing, and related and similar lodging proposals for Curry Village, Yosemite Lodge and plans for the Lower Yosemite Falls Area; these are structurally related proposals with interrelated impacts, analysis, and outcomes. Section 1502.4 (a) of the NEPA regulations (40 C.F.R. 1502.4) stress that the agency, "shall make sure the proposal which is the subject of an E.I.S. is properly defined," referring to the criteria in section 1508 25 and requires that proposals, "which are related to each other closely enough to be, in effect a single course of action shall be evaluated in

a single impact statement." Section 1508.25, defining the "scope" of an EIS, advises that actions which are "connected," "cumulative" or "similar" because they, in short, are all related to an identified course of action affecting a particular environment, should be considered in a single EIS. Only the VIP, as the implementing plan and EIS for the Valley-wide portion of the GMP/EIS provides the scope and context for a Lodge EIS compliant with public law.

An EIS is further required for the Lodge area proposal due to significant new environmental conditions created by the 1997 flood. In 1980 the GMP called for the removal of 130 modest lodging units from the Lodge area located in the known flood plain. In 1992, the CSP increased lodging units at Yosemite Lodge over GMP numbers from 365 to 440, all of the replacement units full-service motel-style units; yet the CSP identified neither the size of the new units nor any actual sites to which they would relocate these units. Indeed the CSP is clear that there are no currently undeveloped sites upon which to build lodging in Yosemite Valley, consistent with the GMP/EIS. The CSP stated that, There are no practicable alternative sites in Yosemite Valley for Housekeeping Camp, Pine Cottage, or the Ahwahnee Cottages. Developable space in Yosemite Valley is limited by the extent of the 100-year flood plain, geologic hazards (rock fall zones), meadows and wetlands, sensitive species, and the extent of existing development. No new construction of lodging in undisturbed areas of the valley will be allowed. There are no previously disturbed areas in Yosemite Valley suitable for the construction of replacement lodging that are of adequate size and have sufficient infrastructure available. Because reducing congestion in existing valley developed areas is a goal of the GMP, relocating lodging to other developments is not acceptable." (CSP p 331).

The CSP pointed out that at the time it was proposed (preflood, 1992) there was no location at the Lodge area outside the known flood plain in which to relocate Pine Cottage (a mere 16 units) let alone the 130 additional units proposed in the CSP. Therefore the CSP was mistaken and unjustified in proposing this increase over GMP numbers; CSP maps confirm this. A supplemental EIS must be written whenever a federal agency makes substantial changes in a proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns addressed in an EIS, or when there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns that have arisen since an EIS was prepared. (40 C.F.R. 1502.9 (c)) The NPS must prepare an EIS which re-evaluates lodging proposals for the Yosemite Lodge as to number, scale, and location in light of significant new environmental conditions created by the 1997 flood. This is also the case for employee housing, discussed separately.

Just as NEPA is clear that Lodge planning must be based on a current EIS, and be put forth in the context of interrelated proposals, the law also insures the public a meaningful role in the planning process. The NPS must provide reasonable alternatives to the proposed action (40 CFR 1502.14). The Lodge DCP EA, however, proposed no reasonable alternative to the proposed action. Since "No Action" does not describe viable and legally compliant mitigation, it is without content as an alternative. A real mitigation strategy for lodging and flood plains would require compliance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the National Flood Insurance Program (44 CFR 60), a revised and approved Statement for Management, and a revision of the Supplement to the EIS, Statement of Findings, Flood Plains. No Action is not a viable alternative lacking such compliance. At issue is the provision of documented alternative in compliance with NEPA. We strongly support that the Park, on the basis of a complete EIS for the Lodge Area, return to GMP lodging and employee housing numbers as the proper starting point for proposed alternatives for the Lodge area.

We believe that very small, rustic cabins without bath and tent-cabins provide a more resource-related experience of the Park where lodging is required. We oppose the change of lodging type to full-service motel style accommodations, as proposed in the Lodge DCPEA. Hospitality industry standards are an inappropriate basis for planning accommodations in a National Park. This is particular to Yosemite Valley due to spatial constraints. Family style cottages which can be turned into "conference centers" have no place in Yosemite.

Moreover, environmental impact analysis related to changes proposed in 1992 was inadequate. The increased labor demands of year-round motel use and the related labor and employee housing needs remain unknown. Increased maintenance needs for full-service units with bath must be analyzed in terms of the additional numbers of and support services for employees and related impacts. Increased water requirements of additional showers and bathrooms must be analyzed. Impacts on winter and off-season ecosystems, wet trails, wet meadows, and air quality must be analyzed.

Moreover, current drawings for the Yosemite Lodge Area demonstrate that while planning restores 6 acres of riparian adjacent area, new construction will impact 14 currently undisturbed acres. The net consumption of 8 areas of Yosemite Valley by development is a violation of the GMP. There is an evident 40% net increase in roads and parking at the proposed Lodge complex, also inconsistent with the GMP. Increased room sizes are evident from available drawings for the proposed Yosemite Lodge. Construction at the planned scale would cause a quantum price increase, as per the Park's pricing formula for lodging. If similar (CSP-derived) plans for Curry Village take the same course, the Valley would suffer a nearly complete elimination of low-to-moderate priced lodging. This is not acceptable. Yosemite is not a resort. As a public institution, Yosemite National Park must insure that moderate and low income individuals, families, and interpretive programs are not shut out of the Valley due to pricing.

The 1980 GMP is a social contract. It is the result of an unduplicated undertaking in participatory democracy: as such it is the sole legitimate basis for public consent in the Park's planning. The profit making needs of the concession are not an alternative to that contract, and are an improper basis for planning Yosemite's future. It would be wrong for the public gift of flood relief money to be used to hinder the public planning goals of the GMP. Yet the Concession Contract does provide the park with the means to reduce infrastructure in accordance with the GMP and the protection and enhancement of resources as new condition arise (Concession Contract/Hotel Services, Section 12 Terminations) We believe that pursuant to public law, and the broad public support for the democratically achieved General Management Plan of 1980, the Park should not lack guidance in its planning efforts.

We enjoin the National Park Service to fulfill its mission under the Organic Act, its public commitments under the GMP, and its legal requirements under NEPA. The F.O.Y.V. directs the NPS to complete a Valley-wide EIS which includes the Yosemite Lodge Area and which implements the 1980 GMP before any plan is initiated for the Yosemite Lodge Area.

2. Employee Housing:

Many of the members of the Friends of Yosemite Valley were the earliest opponents of the NPS decision to move employee housing next to Camp 4. The proximity of that housing is unacceptable. We are sensitive to the need for decent housing for the employees living in Yosemite Valley. We believe, however, that the attempt to rapidly resolve the temporary housing shortage created by the 1997 flood has, in part, resulted in the proposal of a permanent solution to the temporary problem of in-Valley housing which lacks environmental analysis and NEPA compliance, as discussed in comments on the "Yosemite Lodge Area". Additional impact analysis for the Yosemite Lodge Area planning must include noise and visual impacts of development to the campground, and consideration of Camp 4's important historic character.

The lack of compliance with NEPA at (40CFR 1502.2 (c)) in proposing the Yosemite Lodge site for an expanded

employee complex is discussed in paragraph 2 of the section "Yosemite Lodge Area." All new employee housing proposed in the VIP would be located at Yosemite Lodge. Yet employee housing proposals for Yosemite Lodge are based on the assumption, in housing studies between 1992 - 1996, of available land now known to be in the floodplain. NEPA at 40 CFR 1502(c) requires plans to be based on accurate and up-to-date environmental analysis. For employee housing at Yosemite Lodge, as for other aspects of Lodge Area planning, the 1997 flood event created significant new environmental conditions requiring an EIS.

Plans for the Yosemite Lodge employee housing complex outlined in the Lodge DCP EA further lack compliance with NEPA in proposing NO ALTERNATIVE SITES TO THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE. Indeed, even sites considered in the 1996 Housing Plan are absent as alternatives in the Lodge DCP EA. The maintenance area site at Yosemite Village (which as recently as Spring 1996 proposed 182 units) is not mentioned in the Lodge DCP, and remains absent from the VIP. The 1996 plan proposes to eliminate 70 bedspaces from the Ahwahnee Hotel Complex, but without explanation. Housing is moved from Curry Village to the Lodge site. The very narrowing of in-Valley employee housing solutions in this way to a single site precludes compliance with NEPA in failing to provide reasonable alternatives to the proposed action (40 CFR 1502.14).

We oppose increases in food-service and year-round full-service hotel accommodations proposed in the 1992 CSP. Our position is that labor requirements would increase with these proposed changes, and housing and services for employees would necessarily increase based on these proposals. While the NPS has never analyzed such impacts related to CSP proposals, the Park Service did acknowledge that increasing day-use, and planned off-season visitation and lodging increases would require more concession employees to live permanently in the Valley (1992 Housing Plan pp 7-8.) GMP employee numbers were then taken to be obsolete without analysis: this change should be included for analysis in the Valley-wide VIP/EIS.

The Park must provide not only environmental analysis and compliance, and a range of alternatives in locating housing, but a justification and analysis of the need to house employees in excess of GMP numbers on a permanent basis in Yosemite Valley. In this context, we believe that concurrent proposals for a transit system serving Yosemite Valley could significantly affect the assumptions regarding how many employees can live beyond the Valley. These assumptions are found in existing housing plans. Specifically all prior housing studies have assumed a 40-minute commute envelope as the maximum acceptable commute distance for employees commuting in private cars. This assumption is integral to the derivation of all employee-housing numbers. The notion that a commute beyond 40 minutes is too long, taxing, costly and dangerous is based on the assumption of employees driving individual cars. The introduction of scheduled transit to Yosemite should be used by the park as the occasion to revisit the question of available out-of-Valley housing for employees arriving and departing by bus. Available housing at Midpines and Mariposa should be pursued.

The Park has many opportunities to realize the employee housing goals of the GMP through housing solutions beyond Yosemite Valley. We strongly favor the creation of good short-term measures to meet immediate needs until legally acceptable and GMP-compliant permanent solutions are found through public process.

3. Campgrounds:

The Friends of Yosemite Valley support the following related initiatives for camping: The preservation and

enhancement of camping in Camp 4 on a space-available basis.

We believe that Camp 4 is eligible to become and should be designated a national historic landmark.

The eastward expansion of Camp 4.

Increased numbers of first-come-first-served campsites Valley-wide.

Retention of at least GMP numbers of campsites and propose an increase in keeping with resource preservation.

An increase in walk-in campsites and a decrease in vehicle campsites.

Consideration for handicapped access to camping.

Decreased access of large-scale RVs to vehicle campgrounds.

Phased elimination of individual campfires from campgrounds.

We believe that camping should be the primary form of overnight accommodation in Yosemite Valley. Appropriate access and visitation are best matched with resource protection through the progressive elimination of service and land intensive hotel development. We propose a reduction in hotel development (as noted in the section 'Yosemite Lodge', above), and in this context the eastward expansion of the Camp 4 campground. We agree with the VIP's concept of "tiered" camping, to better separate car and RV camping from simple walk-in tent camping. We believe that walk-in camping in the most resource-protective mode for overnight stays, and should be emphasized over car camping.

We believe that the proposal to place Camp 4 on the National Register of Historic Places (Frost and Ament, 1997) corrects the record on Camp 4's eligibility, and is a much more fair measure of the question than the Park's own study (Unrau, 1997). Camp 4 is an historic treasure and deserves NRHP designation. As a matter of good faith, the Park should withdraw plans which harm the campgrounds' historic ambiance. Subsequent plans for Camp 4 and the Yosemite Lodge area should finally recognize the historic character and importance of the campground and nearby natural surroundings and bouldering.

The Park should honor its commitment to achieve GMP-compliant numbers of campsites for Yosemite Valley; an increase over GMP numbers should be seriously considered and become a goal of Park planning. In seeking a plan which achieves GMP numbers, we value meadows and wetland areas as more valuable than mixed-conifer forest; we also value undeveloped land over developed land. We propose a more efficient use of existing campground spaces by the elimination of asphalt and a degree of increased density in existing car campgrounds. We propose the continued use of Rivers campgrounds.

We oppose the development of sensitive wetland areas for camping, such as Lamon Meadow, and believe further study is needed of proposals to move camping to undeveloped and possibly sensitive areas at Happy Isles and "Happy Pines" (an inappropriate name).

In order to decrease new impacts to Yosemite Valley while at the same time attaining the number of campsites that the GMP calls for, Upper and Lower River campgrounds should be retained. However, the few sites nearest to the river could be removed in order to protect riparian zones. We feel the Rivers site is far superior for a campground than

Lamon Meadow, especially given that the Rivers site is already impacted and has been the site of a campground for decades. We propose a redesigned Rivers campground, which would contain at least 225 "walk-in" campsites. A footbridge could replace the Stoneman Bridge, and the road should be eliminated.

In order to attain full GMP numbers for campsites, a portion of the proposed "Happy Pines" campground could be developed. All Pines campgrounds would be accessible to cars, but only one campground, preferably North Pines, would accommodate RVs.

We propose that a portion of one of the Pines campgrounds include a group campground. A group campground in Yosemite Valley is an important asset for interpretive groups. In addition, we propose that the current Backpackers' campground continue to exist as is, and be expanded.

Walk-in campsites should be the preeminent form of campsite in Yosemite National Park for numerous reasons, including: 1) through walk-in camping, campers most closely experience the resource, the real purpose for visitation to Yosemite, 2) while experiencing Yosemite most intimately, walk-in campers create the least impact on Yosemite's resources due to their minimal use of vehicles and other high-impact incidentals, and 3) walk-in campgrounds accommodate more campers in a smaller area, thereby minimizing the size of campgrounds. Carts should be available to walk-in campers to make transportation of camping gear more convenient. The concessioner could rent other camping equipment, including tents, stoves, sleeping bags, etc. This would allow those campers using public transit to bring less luggage. Just as walk-in campsites should be emphasized, we believe the NPS should recognize the value of space-available camping in Yosemite's camping mix. The ability to visit the Valley spontaneously is important for young people, people who do not work desk jobs with telephones, and people traveling from other countries. Many of the arguments against first-come-first-served campsite availability has been based on inconvenience to Park staff, resulting from conflicts created by people driving to the Valley expecting to find campsites. This situation might be alleviated by having concurrent registration for a greatly enlarged space-available campsite number at transit and entrance stations. Moreover, some campsites could be specifically reserved on the space-available basis for those campers arriving in the Valley by transit.

It is important that the Park increase food storage lockers at parking lots and post information regarding methods of decreasing human conflicts with bears.

4. Parking, Transportation, and Access:

We oppose the potential construction of any new parking and transfer facilities at Taft Toe or the Pohono Quarry in the west end of Yosemite Valley. This is a proposal which would violate the Olmstead line and senselessly and needlessly destroy a wild area of the Valley. We believe that existing parking in the east end of the Valley should be preserved (as in Alternative Four) until such time as a phased introduction of a regional transit system removes the need for such parking.

We believe that the logical place for a transit transfer station is in the already developed Yosemite Village area. In the near term, Camp Six could be retained as a complement to this facility to accommodate peak season parking needs. We

support the restoration of the (small) riparian portion of Camp Six, and favor the whole area's restoration when the success of regional transit eliminates the needs for such parking.

We do support the NPS as a participant in the YARTS process. We believe that a voluntary or free or very low-cost transit system instituted for the near term, on a peak season basis, would have a measurable benefit in reducing traffic congestion in the Park. It is important, however, that the Park understands that the success of such a system will hinge on the costs to the user. If it is to be successful, it must be virtually free. This is a reason not to immediately attempt its creation on a year-round basis; funding for a full-time year-round system would soon identify users as a primary source of revenue, something it must by all means avoid doing for its very success. No transit system anywhere in the world runs on fare-box funding. We believe that existing auto entrance fees should be used to partially offset the costs of the YARTS system, or in- park transit, though we disagree with the current costly entrance fee.

We further believe that the Park should work to create a secondary in-park transit system connecting Yosemite Valley to Tuolumne Meadows and Glacier Point on a frequent schedule. Outbound shuttles along these lines should also connect to a Yosemite Village transfer station, and would greatly increase the option of carless travel for: 1) overnight visitors initiating travel within the Park from either end of these travel lines, 2) day-use access to the Valley for through-Park travelers on Highways 120 and 140, who could leave their cars at points along these lines for carless travel to the Valley and later continued through-travel by car. The Badger Pass Shuttle serves as a successful model of how such a system could work. Moreover, it is important that the NPS come to fully understand non-east-Valley recreational use (i.e. west-Valley climbing) in designing a transit alternative for arrival at these locations. We recommend both the retention of roadside and turnout parking for climbers taking cars to these destination, and a "stop request" option on transit and shuttles at areas including, but not limited to: El Capitan, Reed's Pinnacle, the Cookie Cliff, Arch Rock, The Rostrum, etc. Climbers should be able to simply hail a bus for pick-up in either direction at these spots, as well.

Any transit system serving Yosemite Valley must creatively engage solutions to baggage and gear transport and transfer, and become an option for Valley campers. And such a system should be the required means of travel for hotel users in the Valley (with the exception of handicapped visitors) who need little luggage for their stay. Requiring hotel users to take transit to their destination is a reasonable goal in keeping with the Park's mission, given that approximately 1000 parking spaces could be removed from the Valley adjacent to hotels, and given the disproportionate burden on resources which hotel visitation creates in other ways (i.e., employee housing, cars, services, and other hotel service requirements).

We believe that the VIP should identify off-season, and off-hours travel in its discussion of travel patterns. The Park must allow for continued freedom of movement during these times (by car) until a successful transit system becomes a better option for users. The probability that no foreseeable transit system will operate around the clock for twelve months of the year further underscores the need to manage the retention/reduction of east-Valley parking in conjunction with the phased growth of a successful transit system.

The Friends of Yosemite Valley favors a carless society. We look forward to the achievement of a Yosemite which is truly public, truly accessible, and with far fewer cars. At present, the challenge to the Park and the public is to achieve these goals simultaneously. We strongly urge the Park, and the partners in YARTS to do a feasibility study for a light rail system as a solution to transit.

5. Other Valley Issues:

We believe that the Park should further develop plans for the Curry Village area in cooperation with the public prior to seeking approval of the schematic site plan included under the various alternatives of the VIP. The public should be given a clear idea of the actual form development will take before it approves the plans. At issue again is the question of pricing, and the actual extent of proposed development. As a good faith gesture, the park should go on record as intending to replace Curry Village lodging with units of the same (or smaller) size, which will cost the users the same amount of money or less. A commitment of this kind should combine with comparability studies for lodging as a measuring stick for the development of subsequent draft concept plans for the Curry Village area.

We enthusiastically support the creation of the Indian Cultural Center to the west of Camp 4. We recognize the right to ceremonial and traditional use of the park, and the moral and historic right to self-determination for Yosemite's native people.

The Friends of Yosemite Valley thank the Park Service for this opportunity to comment on the Draft VIP, and would like to add to this text further comments during the forthcoming supplemental comment period in the Spring of 1998.

Sincerely,

Friends of Yosemite Valley: Tom Frost, John Middendorf, and Greg Adair

YOSEMITE UPDATE 3/98

"Change is Inevitable; Struggle is Optional"

Last summer the Friends of Yosemite Valley (an organization formed by Tom Frost, Greg Adair, and myself) produced a brochure called "Yosemite Crisis: Hotels or Campsites" which described the untold truth of the development that was planned in the area around Camp 4. Since then, climbers and other environmentally minded individuals and organizations, including the Sierra Club, have been joining the protest of the Yosemite Lodge Plan. The Yosemite Lodge Design Concept Plan (DCP) was put released in April of 1997, and the plan was approved with minor modifications shortly after the comment period ended May 16 during which 197 comments were received. Despite misleading figures to the contrary, it became clear that the plan resulted in a net loss of 8 acres of undeveloped land around the Lodge area, and compressed Camp 4 into a smaller area hemmed in by a cultural center to the west, multi-story employee housing to the south as well as in the current east end of Camp 4, and filled the Swan Slab area with new luxury hotels and a 85 car parking lot. The placement of the parking lot in the Swan Slab area really choked me: couldn't the planners see the trees? Dozens of hundred foot high Ponderosa Pines would be cut. Some of those trees are my favorite in Yosemite; high in their branches is the perfect place for an wilderness adventurer to detune back into the society of cars and noise. I couldn't believe they were even thinking it, since the original act of congress in 1890 which established Yosemite National Park specifically stated as one of the purposes "to preserve all timber"!

It soon became clear that there were stronger forces at work: as interest in the facts about the Lodge Plan was growing, the National Park Service released the Draft Yosemite Valley Implementation Plan (VIP), a 292 page document outlining four alternatives to other areas in Yosemite Valley. The Lodge plan was conspicuously absent. In color-coded maps of the Valley floor noted areas which were to be newly developed (blue) and areas which were to be restored (green!), the Lodge plan remained white. It was noted in the VIP that the Lodge Plan as outlined in the DCP (April 1997) were considered "existing conditions" and was assumed in all the given alternatives. As public comment roared about the VIP, it became clearer and clearer that all the development that was proposed by the NPS could not be assessed properly until all the development, including the Lodge area, was considered together, and conservation organizations and individuals demanded that the Lodge DCP be considered as part of the Yosemite VIP.

Getting tired of all the rhetoric that climbers and folks concerned about the Camp 4 area were getting by the park service, Tom Frost organized legal council. Dick Duane and Larry Silver (a lawyer formerly with the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund) concluded that the National Park Service, when making the construction plan details of the Lodge area, failed to meet the legal requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Tom has since been organizing climbers to join the lawsuit, which he plans to file before the construction takes place. So far, Greg Adair, John Bachar, Jim Bridwell, Yvon Chouinard, Peter Croft, Hans Florine, Tom Frost, Warren Harding, Lynn Hill, Peter Mayfield, Royal Robbins, Galen Rowell, and myself have agreed to sign on.

No one is happy about the fact that legal action has to be considered. However, the park service is showing no signs of ceasing the planned development and encroachment of Camp 4, despite our reasonable and justified protests. The agenda that the NPS has put forth is will strangle the essence of Camp 4, Yosemite's finest and one of the few remaining walk-in campgrounds, a place of history, and perfectly in line of what all our parks should emphasize: a low amenity place where a basecamp can be set up for forays into the wilderness. We are hoping to stop the construction process so we can re-discuss our needs intelligently. Once we are given a reasonable voice in the discussion, the American Alpine Club can lead future negotiations of the retention of the historical structure of Camp 4.

John Middendorf

p.s. author note: Tom Frost once called me the "architect" of our collective actions to save Camp 4.

Notes from a longtime ranger, Ron Mackie : during his employment in Yosemite he has seen the following:

1. The Mariposa Grove Campground Removed and not replaced.
2. The Wawona Campground reduced at least 100 sites and none replaced.
3. The Glacier Point Campground removed and not replaced.
4. The Valley Campgrounds reduced from roughly 3000 sites to the current 800 or so (before the flood).
5. A new Campground at Hodgdon Meadows
6. Tamarack, Smokey Jack and Porcupine Creek Campgrounds eliminated and not replaced
7. Tenaya Lake Walk In eliminated and not replaced.
8. And Tuolumne Meadows reduced from 600 sites to less than 300 and counting.

MY REPORT OF THE THIRD AND FINAL PUBLIC HEARING OF THE JOSHUA TREE BACKCOUNTRY MANAGEMENT PLAN, 1/17/98.

Like Mick Jagger, I went down to the demonstration, to get my fair share of abuse. I was even standing right next to Mr. Jimmy (Jim Bridwell). The Joshua Tree Community Center was packed with over 150 people, about 80% of them climbers. After everyone got a bit settled, Ernest Quintana (his friends call him Ernie) began the meeting by reading from the National Park Service credos, as well as quotes from the 1995 General Management Plan. Although the 1995 plan discussed general concepts such as, "the purpose of the park is to preserve the wildlife therein", the plan did not address specific backcountry issues, so the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the new Draft Backcountry and Wilderness Management Plan, which was to be finalized in February. I tried to get a look at the maps posted in the back corner of the room, but I was redirected by a park service law enforcement ranger to move to another part of the room. "Fire control" he said, meaning that the maps were placed in a fire aisle that needed to be kept clear. Ernie then outlined the 8 points of the new plan, which were:

1. Trails management: to identify and designate use for equestrian, bike and hiking trails.
2. Fixed Anchors: Bolts.
3. 4-WD roads that were acquired with the new lands added recently to the Park.
4. Campgrounds.
5. Backcountry overnight permits.
6. Artificial water sources: a concern for the Big Horn Sheep population.
7. Area closures (complete and utter closures).
8. Desert Tortoise.

He then announced the decisions that were to be made for the new plan were to be heavily influenced by an Advisory Board appointed by Bruce Babbitt, and consisted of Native Americans, property owners, equestrian folks, and others, including Cyndie Bransford, of Friends of Joshua Tree, who represented climbers. He said without doubt that to have any influence, people must be represented by members of the advisory board. He then made it clear that the only comments that were to be considered were those received in writing, clearly only by letter on paper only, not by email, not by phone, and not by spoken comments at the meeting.

When the question period began, Todd Gordon got things going by asking about the specifics of the plan regarding fixed anchors. Ernie responded without giving any specifics, and then passed the question to Brian Huse, western regional director of the National Parks Conservation Association, a member of the Advisory Board. Brian also proceeded to comment without giving any specifics, saying that the policy was still being formulated. After a bit of disappointment from the crowd on not getting to hear anything about our fate, it was asked (and not answered clearly) why Brian Huse was chosen to give the answer about fixed anchors in wilderness rather than Cyndie Bransford, whereupon after some discussion it was agreed that Brian and Cyndie would come to consensus regarding any recommendations that the Advisory Board would give regarding fixed anchors in wilderness. It then became clear to me that the NPS is about to create a policy defining the meaning and intent of the 1964 Wilderness Bill and has passed the buck (and onus of responsibility) onto private citizens and members of special interest groups.

Other comments and questions were asked. One person said it had been hard to get the maps in a timely manner. Another gentleman made a plea for extended equestrian use, and proceeded to complain about all the talk about climbing, whereas there "were more horse people than you'll ever see a rock climber!" This statement was received by the crowd 'throwing the flag' loudly. Others discussed the big horn sheep crisis, and other man pleaded for llama use (giving a great advertisement for llamas in the process), since only horses and mules are allowed presently.

By and by it got back to climbing issues. I asked Ernie if he had received any feedback from the townships regarding the economic ramifications of restricting climbing access (he said that no letters were received, only a phone call). I also asked him (because I was really curious) if there would be any restrictions on military fly-bys over wilderness, to which he responded that it was still allowed. A woman from the southern California's climbers association gave a rousing statement that said it all: that we as climbers had been part of the community since day one (the first park ranger had placed fixed anchors for climbs), that we had been good citizens and had managed ourselves extremely well, and that the proposed plan was clearly confrontational to climbers. Huge cheers and a standing ovation erupted.

Toward the end, it was asked of Ernie as to what weight he planned to give the comments from the Advisory Board verses the comments sent directly to him, to which he responded, "about equal".

Now's the time to write those letters. My letter's going to go like this:

Superintendent Ernest Quintana
74485 National Park Drive
Twentynine Palms, CA 92277

Dear Mr. Quintana;

As a climber and citizen of the United States of America, I am a supporter of wilderness. I speak for a group of my peers, who believe that the original intention of the 1964 Wilderness Act is to preserve areas but not to disallow minimum impact activities such as climbing with fixed anchors. On the domes of Joshua Tree, we require the conservative use of bolts to climb and rappel safely, and we are opposed to the proposed ban on fixed anchors in designated wilderness which would eliminate thousands of historic climbing routes. We are also opposed to regulation requiring the filing of a permit in order to pursue our craft as long as we are in accordance with the Wilderness Act.

The 1964 Wilderness Act specifies that land designated as wilderness is allowed multiple uses. The uses as currently defined include: foot and horse travel, guiding, scientific study, livestock grazing where previously established, and mining on pre-existing mining claims. The uses that are NOT allowed are use of mechanized transport, road building, logging, and staking new mineral claims or mineral leases. Clearly, climbing on durable surfaces with pre-established anchors is within these boundaries. We believe that the impact caused by climbers is negligible, and we feel that climbing routes utilizing fixed anchors placed with hand tools is not comparable to the impact caused by acceptable use of wilderness in other areas. We believe that the Joshua Tree Backcountry Management Plan misrepresents the 1964 Wilderness Act in the reference to the installation of bolts detracting from wilderness, and we feel that to maintain the integrity of the 1964 Wilderness Act, any refinement of the definition needs to be done democratically on a

nationwide basis so that wilderness will be consistently and fairly defined for all user groups, including climbers.

Yours sincerely,
(name and address)

AFTERNOTE: I offered the climbing community free big wall spoons and birdbeaks for writing letters on these issues. All told, I sent out over 500 pieces of free gear and recieved copies of wonderfully thought-out letters.

[RETURN TO Bigwalls.net](#)

bigwalls.net

Greetings from Japan.

How do you do?

My name is Kazuyuki Sasaki.

I'm editor of small climbing mag. called Run Out in Japan.

Also I love to climb and visit your home page.

Because your climbing attitude has influence on my mind.

I found article "Yosemite Crisis: Hotels or Campsites?" in your home page.

I am deeply concerned about the future of Yosemite valley and Camp4.

Because it is not only yours but also problems for all over the world.

So I would like to cooperate with your projects using our magazine.

What we can do from Japan?

Off course, I'm gonna write about situation of Yosemite Valley in it.

I can suggest our magazin's reader as following.

We might send postcard to American Embassy in Tokyo, Gov. of California
or FYV.

We maight do demonstration some way.

Which is most effective method?

Please give us some hints.

We also have similar problem in Japanes crag.

And we want to study from your case.

Our magazine just issued No.0.

It is futuring

Ascent of Shark's Fin (Mt. Meru)

Inerview of Katuhiro Yamasita

etc.

My coworker went to Shark's Fin two years ago.

It was incomplete.

love and peaceful climbing,

sasaki kazuyuki/Run Out

e-mail uprising@clio.or.jp

phone/fax81-265-96-2379

A few words about the National Environmental Policy Act, by John Middendorf (article for the Boatman's Quarterly Review)

Beginning over 38 years ago, Congress began passing a series of environmental legislation with the intent of preserving regions of our country for future generations. The Wilderness Act was passed in 1964, followed by the National Environmental Policy Act in 1969 and the Endangered Species Act in 1973. These three federal actions are perhaps the strongest protectorates of many of our wildlands today, and balance strong legislation such as the 1872 Hardrock Mining Act. Of the three preservationist acts, perhaps NEPA has done the most to create a greater environmental awareness and to inspire our land managers to have a deeper look at their planning processes.

NEPA case law can be abstract, but the following experience I had with opposing a development plan in Yosemite demonstrates how NEPA law can help create a friendly partnership with park planners. In January of 1997, a warm spell melted the Sierras and flooded Yosemite Valley floor, damaging roads and buildings. It was declared an emergency, and Congress immediately granted \$178 million for repairs. In rapid succession, Yosemite National Park came up with a development plan for the Yosemite Lodge area, an Environmental Assessment (EA), and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). It was a blur of planning activity, and only 200 people had gotten the chance to submit their comments on the EA, mostly people who had responded to my internet offer for free climbing gear if they wrote a letter to the park with their thoughts and concerns. Climbers especially had cause for concern, as Camp 4, one of the last traditional walk-in campgrounds and meeting place for generations of climbers, was on the edge of the already over-developed Lodge area.

The approved plan as presented to the public was a simple one-page text affair that emphasized the restoration of the river's riparian zone. Very little was mentioned of the extensive development of 17.5 pristine acres. After procuring a detailed architectural plan that was smuggled out of the park offices, I printed a thousand copies of a brochure called "Yosemite Crisis: Hotels or Campsites?" with reproductions of the unpublished maps, and distributed them on cars parked in the lodge area at night. The maps visually clarified the sprawl of hotels, parking lots, and employee dorms that was to take place. Camp 4 was to be closed indefinitely and reopened years later as a fraction of its former size. The adjacent Swan Slab area, then a serene public area, was to become an exclusive back yard for dozens of new four-plex hotels. Dozens of beautiful old growth hundred feet high Ponderosa Pines were to be harvested to make room for the new buildings and roads.

Concerned Yosemite denizens pulled hundreds of construction survey stakes in the area, and with the aid of the Ruckus society, I began planning a portaledge protest that was to take place high up in the fated trees. Fortunately, the illegal protest became unnecessary when Tom Frost, a legendary pioneer of El Capitan climbing, entered the picture with the inspiration and the required funds to hire a NEPA lawyer, Dick Duane, who immediately began a discussion with the Park Service.

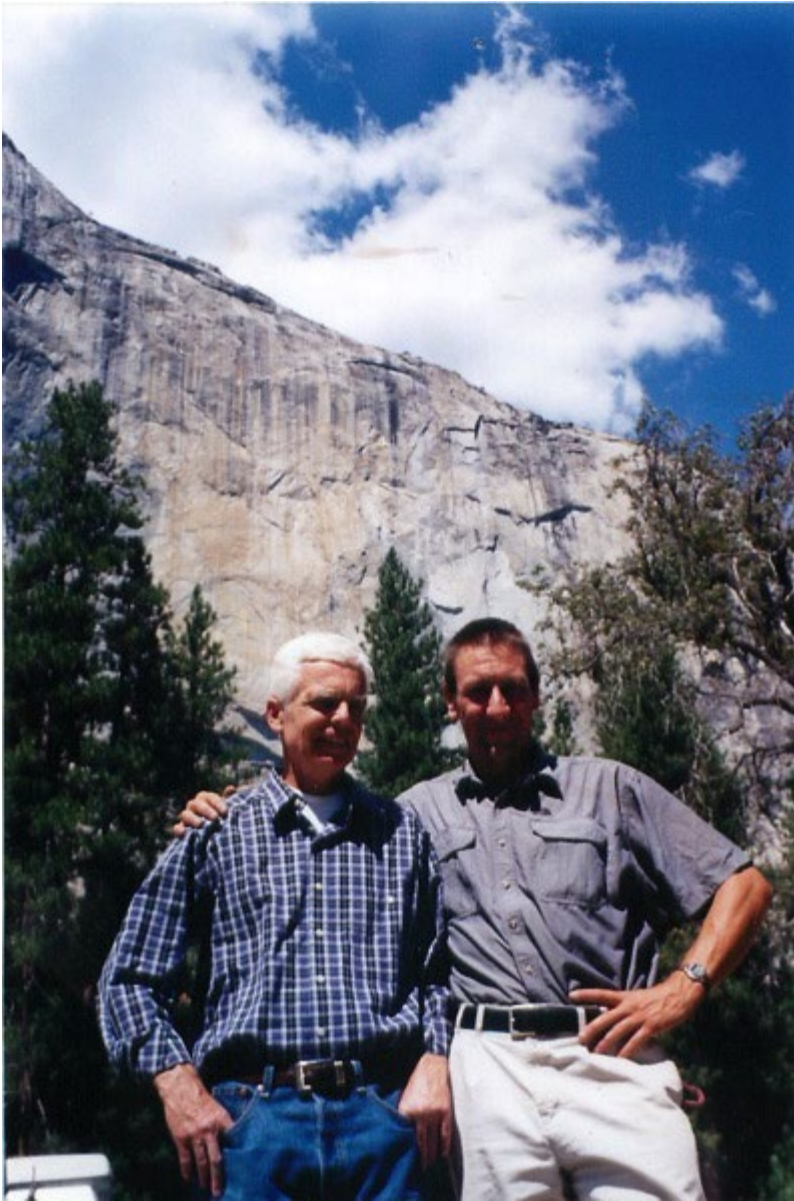
After nearly a year of discussions, a turning point occurred during a meeting at the San Francisco NPS headquarters in April, 1998, which came about solely because we were working through legal channels. The "closed-door" meeting was hosted by John Reynolds, the western regional director of the Park Service, and was attended by Stan Albright, the superintendent of Yosemite, and eight invited climbers, including Dick Duane, Yvon Chouinard, Tom Frost, Jim McCarthy, and myself. The park wanted to listen to our concerns, and each of us gave a talk on our feelings and thoughts of the matter (having spent over 2000 nights camping out in Yosemite, I spoke of the visceral difference of sleeping outside versus staying in a hotel). Tom had become our leader and spiritual advisor, and implored us not to say or do anything negative to our friends in the Park Service, despite our impulses and feelings.

Late in the day, after a full day of discussion, the park proposed to us a "compromise". If we agreed to drop our legal pressure, they would only build three multi-story employee dorms in the eastern half of Camp 4, rather than four dorms, as called for in the already approved plan. The hotel development plan for the Swan Slab area remained unchanged. After a moment of stunned silence on our parts, Tom stood up with a speech that nearly brought me to tears. He calmly told them that we loved them and that we felt they were our brothers. Then, he made the analogy that it was our belief that the ship they were sailing was not only off course, but it was in the wrong ocean, and he assured them that we

would help them find their way. The lack of acrimony must have stunned them, and as we quietly got up to leave, John Reynolds walked us to the door, mentioning that he agreed with our beliefs, but that his hands were tied by congressional pressure, and only a strong wind could change things. We interpreted Mr. Reynold's comment as the go-ahead to request the injunction, as it was the only way the park could halt the bulldozers and chainsaws. In the spirit of friendship, we filed the lawsuit the next day. Things turned around quickly: the issue attracted national media attention, and the park immediately began an EIS scoping process that involved organizations representing hundreds of thousands of people. The EIS also allowed user groups (who lacked the benefit of lobbyists) to broaden their influence, such as the American Alpine Club who now work as partners and co-planners with the Park Service.

NEPA actions are likely to be at the core of the determination of the future of Grand Canyon National Park in the coming years. It is important that the boating community takes part in the decision making process. Some cogent NEPA points can be summarized:

1. NEPA outlines the requirements of an agency of the federal government when a decision is made that "may have an impact on man's (sic) environment". A full scale EIS is required only when a "major federal action" occurs.
2. Participation in the scoping process is the responsibility of all user groups. Park planners welcome valid concerns if presented well and amicably. People intimately involved with an area are perhaps the only ones that can communicate vital key information, and individuals and groups involved from beginning can offer the most insight.
3. A full scale EIS can't necessarily prevent development from taking place; for example, our NEPA lawyer told us that if the park wanted a restaurant on top of Half Dome, it could happen even after a NEPA process with ten million opposing comments. Yet the EIS study requires an extensive investigation of alternatives, and generally results in a better solution that balances the ubiquitous conflicting demands of use.
4. Although activism and indirect action can help others to become engaged, approaching decision-makers directly as friends and co-planners with legal representation is the most effective. Generally, only a lawsuit can turn a cursory EA into an EIS, yet only a well-financed group should consider initiating a NEPA lawsuit, as legal actions are expensive and time consuming.
5. Timing is everything, and good will goes a long way.



Above: Tom Frost and John Middendorf at the base of El Cap

Links

1969 National Environmental Policy Act: <http://es.epa.gov/oeca/ofa/index.html>

1973 Endangered Species Act http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/laws/ESA/ESA_Home.html

1964 Wilderness Act <http://www.fs.fed.us/outernet/htnf/wildact.htm>

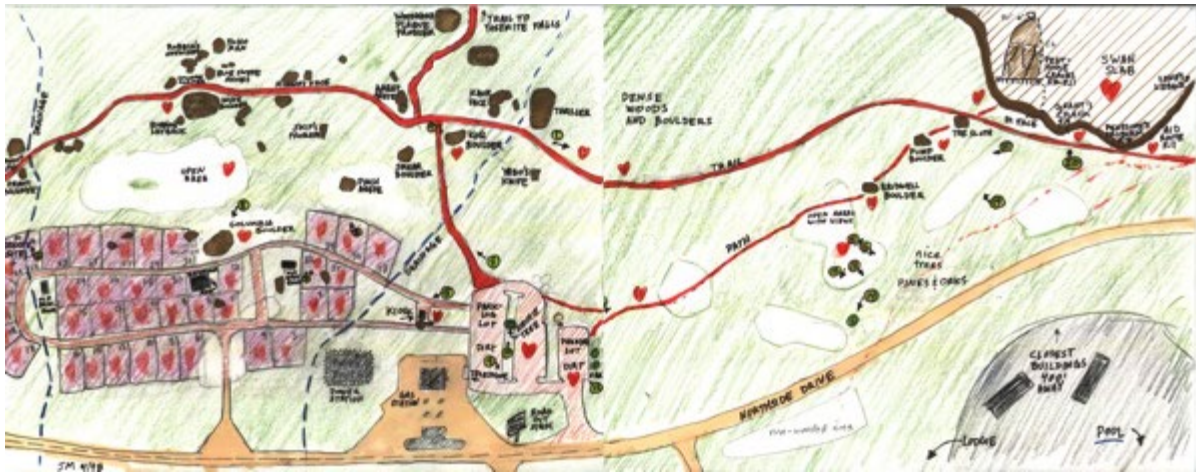
1872 Mining Act http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/specials/mining/26875_mine11.shtml

Freedom of Information Act <http://www.usdoj.gov/04foia/>

More information on the Yosemite NEPA lawsuit camp4index.html



Above: Photograph for Men's Journal



Above: my "Favorite Places" map

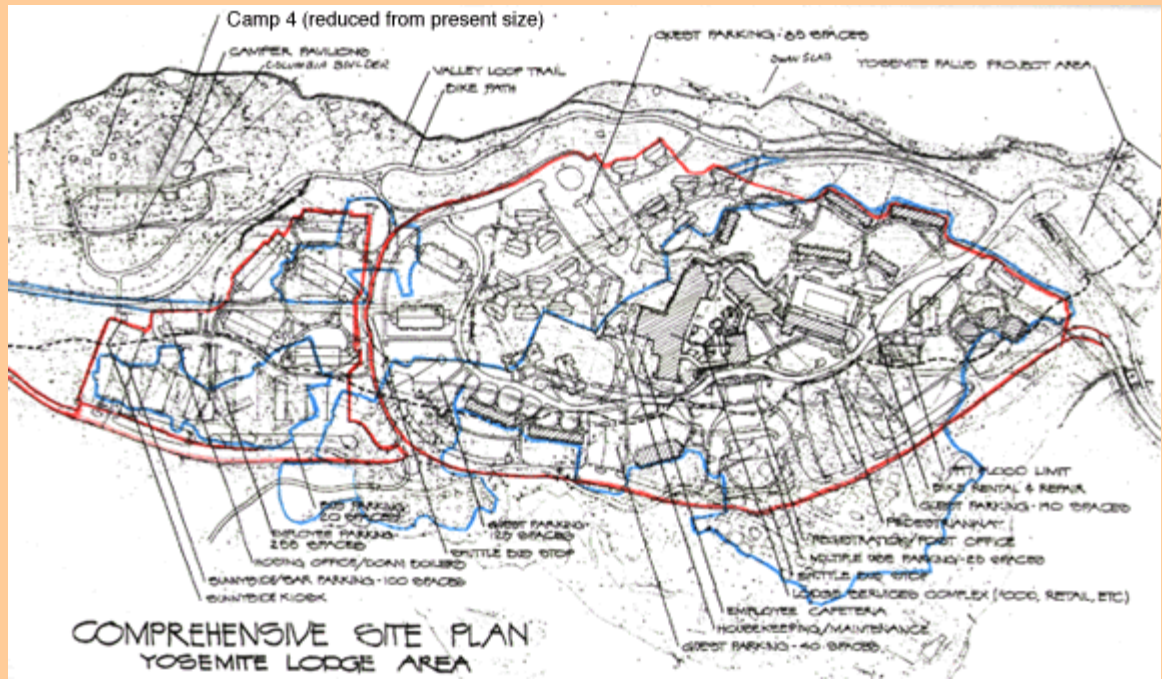


Above: Sunnyside area after the flood

[RETURN TO Bigwalls.net](http://Bigwalls.net)

Original Plan for Development in the Lodge Area

Old (blue) and new (red) lodge area development envelopes

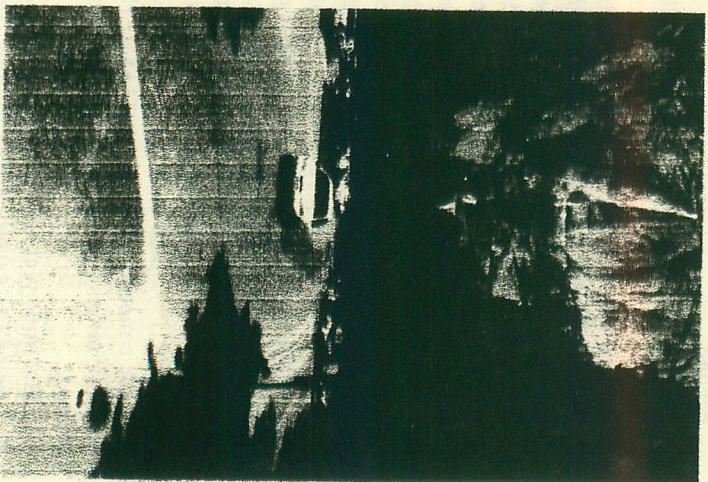


Yosemite Crisis

Hotels

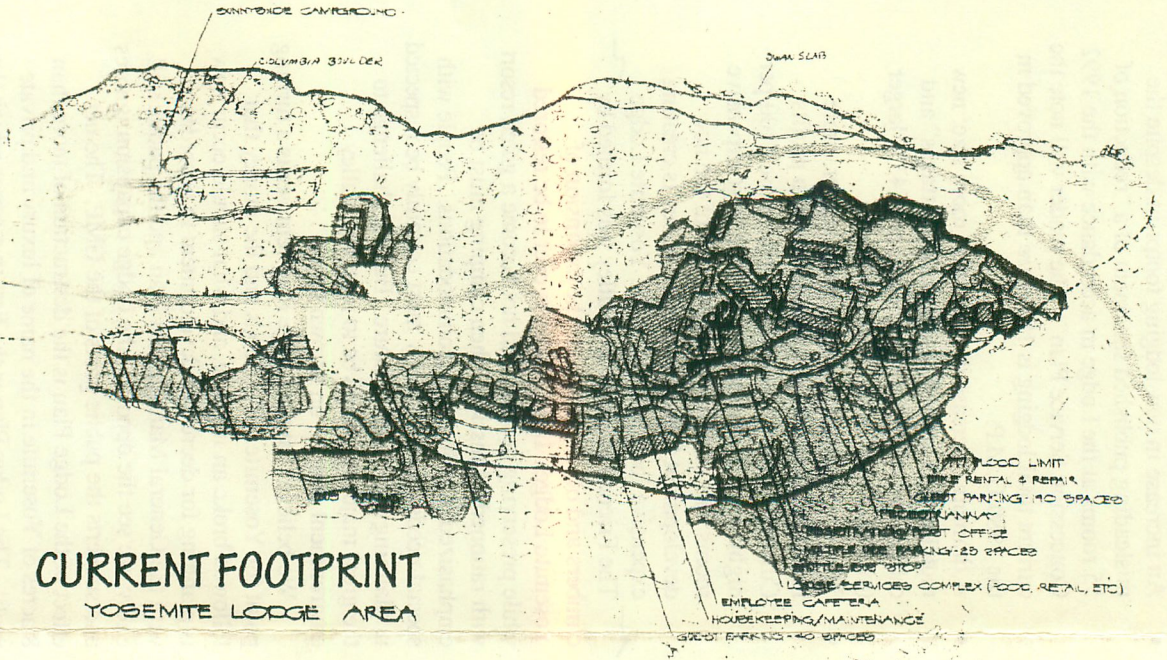
or

Campsites?

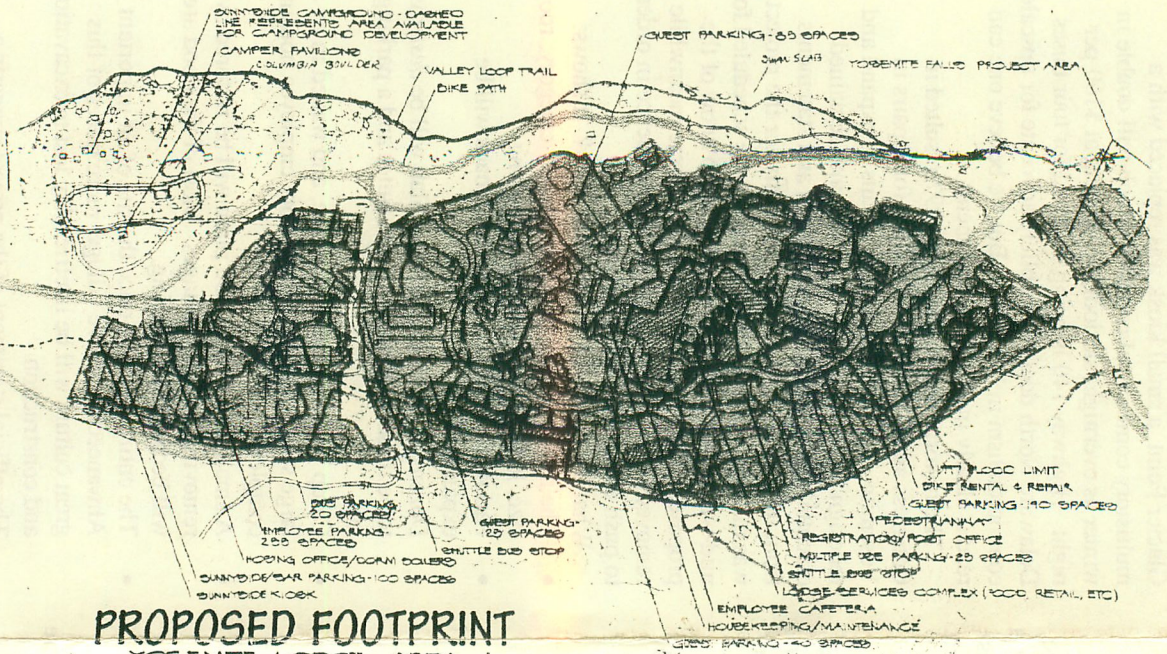


Pave Paradise...

CURRENT FOOTPRINT YOSEMITE LODGE AREA



PROPOSED FOOTPRINT YOSEMITE LODGE AREA



Friends of Yosemite Valley

(c/o 256 Church St.
San Francisco 94114,

tel. (415)864-1932).

Hotels or Campsites?

From the earliest arrival of non-natives to Yosemite, and with alarming speed since 1945, the Incomparable Valley has been managed to make way for increasing tourism, cars, kiosks, stores, parking lots, and hotels. Urbanism resulted, a place suited to convenience, for some a resort destination, something it should never be.

By the 1970's Yosemite's crisis was obvious. Yet it was then that an expansion of environmental awareness was afoot, and activism was strong. Advocates rejected, then rejected again versions of a Master Plan which would have further abused Yosemite. From that impasse, a broad democratic process began in which 80,000 citizens and hundreds of public interest groups participated over nearly a decade to produce the General Management Plan of 1980. Its primary goals, admired by a broad majority, are:

- to remove automobiles from Yosemite Valley.
- to redirect development to the Park periphery and beyond.
- to restore the essence of wilderness in the Valley.

Still, the General Management Plan was not utopia, but a blueprint for an elected future and it outlines specific numbers for reduced amenities such as hotel rooms. It was therefore *already a compromise* with development. As the Sierra Club said, "It is therefore the *minimum* acceptable standard for further planning."

For seventeen years the 1980 G.M.P. has suffered inaction and setbacks, but none as stunning as the reversal of 1992. In that year planners released the Concession Services Plan, supposed to implement the concession portion of the 1980 G.M.P. Instead it rewrote, amended, and ignored the earlier plan. A prominent example was lodging; without justification additional units would be removed (tents and tent cabins) and replaced with full service luxury hotel rooms. The 1992 plan drew the outrage of advocates, and made a mockery of the 1980 G.M.P. Hearings were called for, rallies and meetings attended, and lawsuits rumored.

In that same year, 1992, the Delaware North Corporation (an Atlantic City gambling concern) was awarded Yosemite's concession contract. The Park selected Delaware North over the Yosemite Restoration Trust, a non-profit group organized by

environmentalists in order to win the concession contract and use it to actively reverse commercialism. Since 1992, pressure towards development has increased. Recently in designated wilderness near Glacier Point, a small kiosk was replaced with a multistory commercial complex which will double in winter as overnight ski lodging starting at \$160 per night. Highway 140 is being widened for tour buses. Delaware North does not publicly advocate for upscale commercialism in Yosemite. But we believe one can read it clearly in planning documents.

The historic winter floods of 1997 resulted in Congress authorizing \$178 million for repairs in Yosemite. Almost immediately, plans to expand and redesign Yosemite Lodge appeared, and remained essentially unchanged despite letters and statements from individuals and groups. Publicity for the project was minimal; public walk-throughs were scheduled for mid-week, and very few people came to know of the proposed changes. The Lodge plans were meanwhile removed from the legally prescribed sequence in order to push along their fast approval.

What then does the Lodge Plan show? It shows:

- The new lodge will expand in every category: room size, lodging, and employee housing.
- Parking lots will be bigger and roads will be expanded.
- Dozens of trees around Swan Slab will be *destroyed* to be filled with luxury motel suites and a parking lot.
- Camp 4 will be reduced in size, and walled in by a large scale multi-unit three story employee housing complex.
- A small area in the flood plain will be restored by removing low cost cottages. Most of the flood area will become new parking.
- The entire area was once the site of an important Ahwaneechee native village; more traces of this great culture will be irretrievably lost to excavation and construction.

The official statement of the project suggests a major restoration of the Merced flood plain with less impact through new construction in forest areas; "5.4 acres of undeveloped but previously disturbed and moderately degraded woodland would be developed and 8.3 acres of riparian and adjacent upland would be restored." There is no evidence for this. A total of 6

acres will be restored and 14 acres will be developed, a net loss of 8 acres. A close analysis of the approved plans also shows:

- An increase in parking (4.1 acres, a 40% increase).
- An increase in new lodging footprint despite the misleading published statement of a "reduction of 55 rooms at the Lodge in accordance with the 1992 Concession Service Plan". The reader will note the current total lodging is 155 *more* than approved in the 1980 G.M.P.
- A dramatic increase in individual room size: new motel rooms are 56% larger, and "cottages" and cabins, the mainstay of the plan, are 143% larger (averaging 695 square feet per room).
- The new Yosemite Lodge will be bigger, more luxurious, and will increase concession profits. Currently, the most expensive rooms are \$100 per night; with the proposed plan, the *least* expensive rooms will be \$100 per night. All of the new development funded by public money is creating expensive lodging units at the Yosemite Lodge.

The Friends of Yosemite Valley was formed by climbers and others to oppose the expansion of Yosemite Lodge. If the Valley is ever to be restored while preserving access - and not become a gated resort with rationed admission - then camping must be emphasized over luxury accommodations. People with special needs and the elderly must certainly be respected in planning the Valley's future. But the challenge to the great majority should be to meet the Valley environment simply, on its own terms.

We believe that the Lodge Plan represents a turning point for Yosemite. The floods and the money that followed broke an impasse, and what should occur now is planning for decreased development in accordance with the General Management Plan and the public will. Sadly, we see the opposite; the Lodge expansion ignores and subverts the public goals of the GMP. The net effect of the Lodge Plan is the destruction of more than 8 acres of Yosemite in the name of luxury and private profit. The Lodge Plan is the first in a series which the flood money will fuel. Similar changes are foreseen for Camp Curry. An 1800 car parking lot is under discussion for a site near El Capitan Meadow.

It is time to break this chain of events. It is time to do what has not been done and make a stand for Yosemite Valley. Please join us.

Field Research from the Valley (originally posted on rec.climbing)

Though the weather looked bad, this past Friday (1/9/98) I decided to blow off work and visit Yosemite, and once I got there, I decided to finally experience the "wilderness" from the comfort of a hotel room. Though I have spent over 2000 nights in Yosemite (fully seven years of my life!) spread out over a 20 year climbing career, never once had I contributed to the concession's lodging profits, but seeing how they're dictating the future of Yosemite visitation, I though maybe I'd check it out. So I shelled out the 100 bucks for Manzanita Room 3400, and enclosed myself. The drone of the bathroom fan and the muffled hard noises from other hotel inhabitants seemed eerie in contrast to the occasional clank of gear and cook pots and the soft murmured conversations I was used to hearing while with fellow campers in the campground, only several hundred yards away. The view from my front door was of the post office and the Olympic sized lodge swimming pool, whose perceived value is so great that Delaware North was given permission to develop the Swan Slab grove of Ponderosa Pines (most of which will get cut down) in order to expand their hotels rather than do away with such an essential "recreational" feature of the resort property they want to create.

On Saturday morning the weather was cloudy, as it was the night before when I went to bed. I ventured out to the Lodge cafe, where I ran into Stephanie Davis and Warren Hollinger, who had just that morning made it down from the top of El Cap. They had just finished the South Seas to PO route on the big stone, and were warming up in the cafe loading up on coffee and sharing exploits with Kennan Harvey and Mike Pennings, who had also come down from climbing El Cap a few days earlier. Looking a bit weary but glowing from the experience, they told me of their efforts topping out late the day before and descending the East Ledges through the night in bad conditions. As I asked them, "Oh was it storming last night?" I realized the full extent of the isolation a hotel room creates. Though I had myself on many occasions battled fierce weather, slippery rock, and desperate conditions on the final pitches of a big stone route, I found it hard to relate just at that moment on their tales of the fiercity and savageness of the conditions, since for me, it was a warm and safe night. I realized as well why a climber's adventures will never fully be understood by anyone who has never suffered to such an extent as being at the hands of mother nature while hanging from a steep rock wall. In a way, it makes me sad, but then again, it makes me realize that I wouldn't trade my own adventuresome experiences with anything in the world.

The current plan for the Valley is to increase the infrastructure of the hotel accommodations of the concession, and to reduce the number of campsites. Though Yosemite Valley is not exactly wilderness, it does offer many incredible spots to commune with nature and experience the pulse of the land. As the resort company, Delaware North, continues to push its development agenda for its commercial venues in Yosemite, humanity's ability to experience the outdoors will further incrementally decrease.

There is power in nature, as a society we are losing our connection. We need to think of ways to protect it, not develop it. The 8 virgin acres in the Lodge area planned for development, including the Swan Slab grove north of Northside drive, though minuscule compared to the real wilderness currently being raped elsewhere in the country, will be a keystone representation of the true power of developmental agendas, as one of the nicest untouched areas on the Valley floor, a favorite of all winter inhabitants of Yosemite, will be lost to hotels. We should save it not just for ourselves, or our country, or the trees, but for every living thing on this planet.

John Middendorf, Reporter in the field

bigwalls.net

Here is the format for requesting information using the Freedom of Information Act

Date

FOI Officer

SUPERINTENDENT

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CA 95389

FOI Request for (the subject you are looking for, be specific)

Dear FOI Officer,

Pursuant to the Federal Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 5 552, I

request access to and copies of;

(spell out here exactly what you are looking for and where it may be found)

I agree to pay reasonable duplication fees for the processing of this request in an amount not to exceed \$25. However, please notify me prior to your incurring any expenses in excess of that amount.

Please waive any applicable fees. Release of the information is in the public interest because it will significantly contribute to public understanding of government operations and activities.

If my request is denied in whole or part, I ask that you justify all

deletions by reference to the specific exemptions of the act. I will also expect you to release all segregable portions of otherwise exempt material.

I, of course, reserve the right to appeal your decision to withhold any information or to deny a waiver of fees.

I would appreciate your communicating with me by telephone, rather than by mail, if you have questions regarding this request. I look forward to your reply within 20 business days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays), as the statute requires.

Thank you for your assistance.

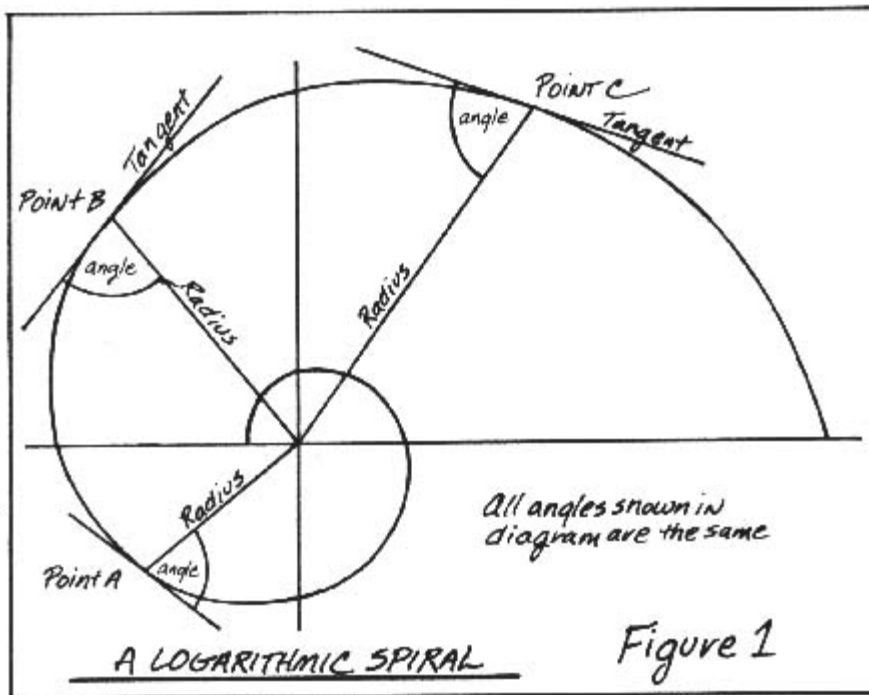
CAMS-A Technical Review (Article circa 1985)

by John Middendorf

Without a doubt, cams have revolutionized climbing. Ever since Jardine invented the first fully functional unit (with the proper camming angle) to the climbing community with his introduction of Friends, climbing achievement standards have advanced considerably through the use of superior technology. The way camming devices work is describable by basic engineering concepts. The principles of cams (more specifically, logarithmic spirals) described below are prerequisite to a functional camming unit design and use.

Logarithmic Spirals

The modern camming unit utilizes the logarithmic spiral (also known as an equiangular spiral). The logarithmic spiral is a mathematical curve which has the unique property of maintaining a constant angle between the radius and the tangent to the curve at any point on the curve (figure 1).



A logarithmic spiral cam (a "constant angle cam") ensures that the line between the axle and the point of contact (the "line of force") is at a constant angle to the abutting surface, independent of how the cam is oriented. Thus the force diagram for a given camming unit will be identical no matter how it is positioned in a crack, i.e. whether it be compressed or expanded (figure 2).

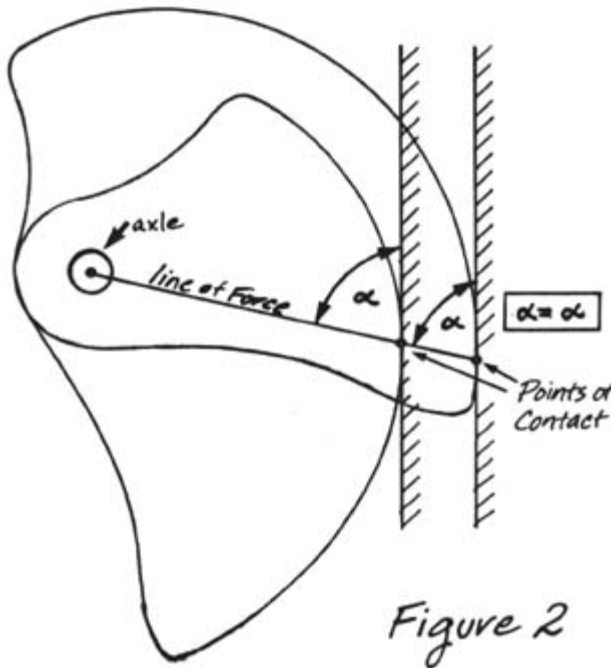


Figure 2

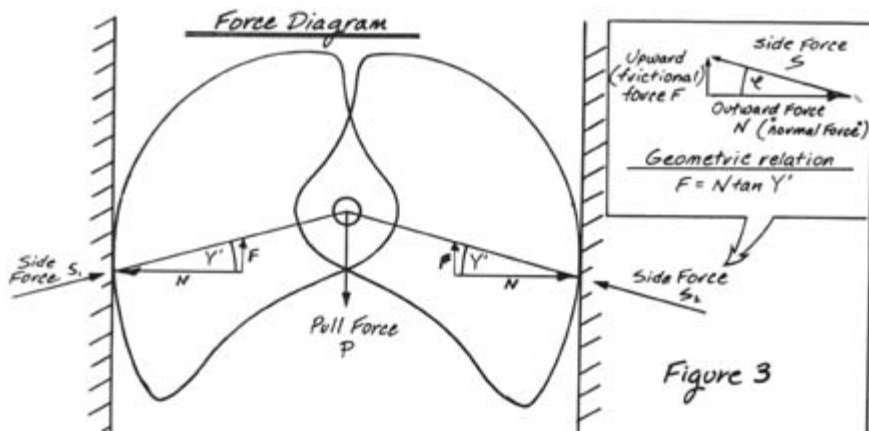
A Cam at two different orientations. (Orientation of line of force is constant).

Friction

Camming units completely depend on the friction created between the camming unit and the rock. The force created by friction is best analyzed by understanding the engineering basic law of friction: the Frictional force is equal to the coefficient of friction (μ) times the Normal (perpendicular) force ($F = \mu N$). For example, a 100 pound object with a coefficient of friction of 0.50 between the object and the floor requires 50 pounds of force to move it in a horizontal direction (0.50 times 100 lbs. equals 50 lbs.). The value of the coefficient of friction is determined by the materials and shapes (on a macroscopic level) of the adjoining surfaces.

Force diagrams

A force diagram is an analytical tool used by engineers to determine the individual forces exerted on an object or mechanical device. Vectors depict the forces and represent the inclination and magnitude of each force. The sum of all forces exerted on an object in static equilibrium equals zero, allowing us to calculate unknown forces. Figure 3 is a force diagram for an opposed 2-cam unit (here we define Y' as the constant camming angle). Here, the vector sum of the two side forces and the pull force equals zero. Each side force vector can be represented by two perpendicular vectors, the horizontal component, N (the outward force) and the vertical component, F (the frictional force). The horizontal and vertical components of the side force are related both geometrically ($F = N$ times the tangent of Y'), and physically. The physical relation stems from a basic law of friction explained above. Combining these two relations allows us to pinpoint the factors involved in the holding ability of a camming unit.



Force diagram analysis (figure 3).

$S_1 = S_2$ (sum of horizontal forces)

$P = 2F$ (sum of vertical forces)

Note that $2F$ must be greater or equal to P , the pulling force, for holding to occur. Each side force contributes one half to the overall upward component (the holding force).

Geometric relation: $F = N \tan Y'$

Law of friction: $F = \mu N$

Combining above equations and simplifying, we arrive at the relation $\mu > \tan Y'$ for holding to occur.

Restated in plain English, this relation tells us that the coefficient of friction (μ) must be greater than the tangent of the camming angle (Y') for holding to occur. Thus, if the trigonometric tangent of the camming angle is greater than the coefficient of friction, the camming unit will pull out of the rock under load.

Coefficients of friction

The coefficient of friction (μ) can be determined experimentally between two materials. A good general design figure determined empirically for the coefficient of friction between aluminum and rock is 0.30. Some types of rock have a greater coefficient than this with aluminum; the sandstone coefficient, however, is sometimes effectually less due to thin shear planes of the large grained, loosely cemented sandstone crystals, which explains the occasional failure of camming units in sandstone cracks. A good deal of experimental research could be done on the coefficients of friction between cams of various materials and surface characteristics and various rock-types (including icy cracks) under load, allowing cam designers to optimize even further for varying conditions and rock types.

Range and Camming Angles

The camming angle utilized for the shape of a camming device determines the cam's range (that is, the cam's maximum/minimum size ratio), and the cam's holding power. A larger camming angle results in a more elongated cam (use CAM program below to see this visually). Range and holding power are inversely proportional. Increasing the camming angle of a single-axis camming unit increases the range but decreases the holding power. If the tangent of the camming angle (Y') exceeds the coefficient of friction (μ), the cam will pull. Note visually that a camming unit placement in a downward flare effectively decreases the camming angle and thus decreases the holding power. The larger camming angle results in a cam with more range, yet requires a higher coefficient of friction to hold the same

force. Modern camming units optimize range and holding power with cam angles near 14.5 degrees.

Draw your own...

The mathematical equation for a logarithmic spiral is $R = be^{a\theta}$. To draw a logarithmic spiral curve, plot points along the curve, and connect the dots. All you need is a calculator with trigonometric functions, and a sheet of graph paper.

In the equation above, R equals the radius of the curve at a given point; b is a scaling factor and can be chosen arbitrarily; e is the natural log (≈ 2.718); a is 1 over the tan of the camming angle; and θ is the angle of the radius (in radians). R and θ determine points on a curve plotted in polar coordinates; for a given θ , R can be calculated and the point (R, θ) can be plotted. Alternatively, we can use (x, y) coordinates (allowing us to use normal graph paper) to plot points along the logarithmic spiral curve. The conversion factor of θ from degrees to radians is: $\theta(\text{radians}) = 2/360 \times \theta(\text{degrees})$. π is equal to 3.1416.

The x and y values can be plotted and connected creating a curve as in figure 6. Once the curve is plotted, the axle hole must be drilled at the origin $(x, y = 0, 0)$; material must be added around the hole. To create smoother curves, create a chart with more values of θ and plot more points. To create curves with differing cam angles, substitute the desired camming angle by varying a ($a = 1/\tan$ of cam angle).

Figure 6: Graph

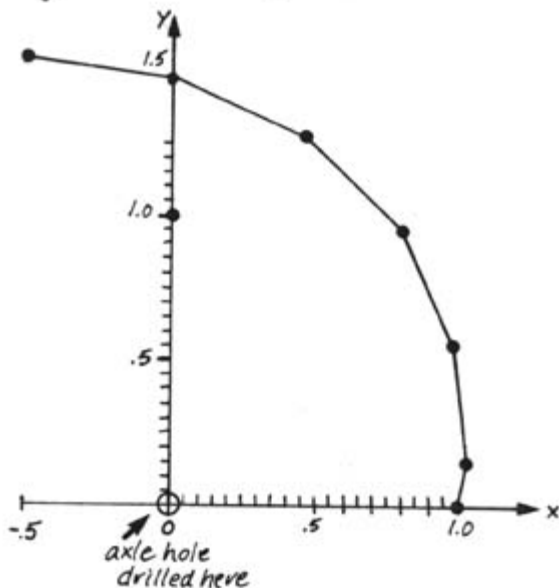
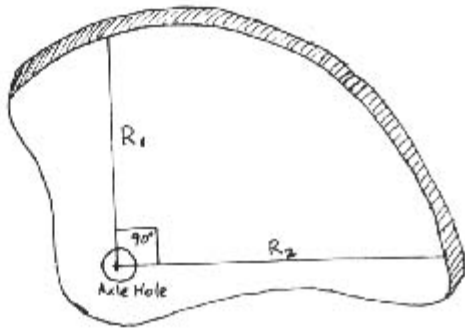


Figure 6

Determining camming angles of an actual cam.

It is possible to calculate the camming angle of an actual cam with two measurements of the length of the cam at two points 90 degrees apart (figure 7) Plug the two values of R_1 and R_2 into the equation on figure 7 to arrive at the camming angle.

Figure 7



Equation
Camming Angle $\gamma' = \sin^{-1} \left[\frac{2}{\pi} \ln \frac{R_2}{R_1} \right]$

Figure 7.

[source code](#)

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Five Days in the Western Borehole

by John Middendorf



photo: 1000 feet underground in Lecuguilla (product testing new pack design)

After a routine chat about Zion with my climbing buddy Dave Jones, he casually mentioned an upcoming Lechuguilla Cave trip with possibly a space available. With some begging and a bit of exaggeration about my previous caving experience, I found myself invited for the trip.

I remembered reading about Lechuguilla from the March, 1991 article in National Geographic. It is called "The Jewel of the Underground", with many mysterious and beautiful formations. With little other information except for a few instructions from cavemaster Ron Delano, I got outfitted for the trip underground with a cave pack, white rubber soled boots, an arsenal of headlamps, provisions for five days, and a few other odds and ends.

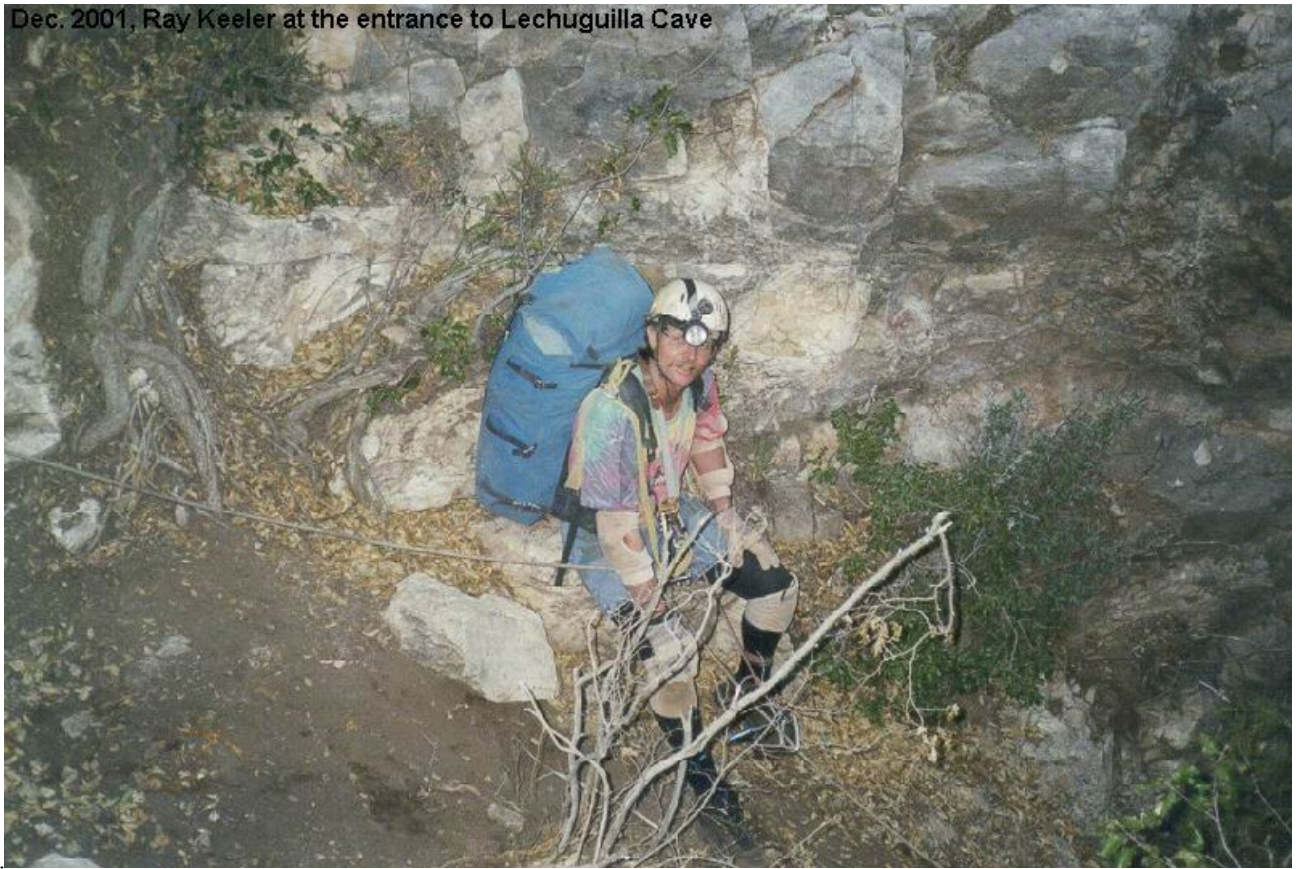
Not without considerable intrepidation, I drove down to Carlsbad on January 12, 1995 to meet with my teammates at the Cave Resource Foundation in Carlsbad National Park. Our team of twenty underground enthusiasts (troglomen), fearlessly led by Dave Jones and Ron Delano, had come from all over the country for this trip, from Maine to Washington state to all points in between. We were grouped in teams of 4 with the purpose of surveying new areas of the cave, which currently consists of 80 plus miles of known passage. Our goal was to discover two miles of new cave.

Already one of the largest caves in the world, it is suspected that the Lechuguilla cave system is much larger what has already been explored and mapped. Not discovered until 1986, the cave's only entrance is in the bottom of a 80 foot sinkhole a few miles from Carlsbad Caverns. Wind howls out of a small hole in the corner of the sinkhole, sometimes over 50 miles per hour, as a result of low barometric pressure on the surface. Calculations involving the volume of the escaping air and air pressure give a general estimate of the cave's size.

Our hopes were to find "breakouts", unknown passages that could lead to greater regions of the cave. Many of the passages that led to the major branches of the cave--The East, The Southwest, and The Western Borehole--had been discovered by members of our team on previous expeditions. With the exception of one 4-man team going to the "Far East", known for its tortuous underground descent to the deepest portion of the cave at 1500 feet beneath the surface, we were all going to the Western Borehole, a huge underground subway chamber that travels in a straight east-west path for nearly 2 miles with only a few discovered side passageways.

Not since jumaring up fixed lines while committing to an extended vertical stint on one of my earlier multi-day big wall climbs had I felt such an overwhelming animalistic fear as our team opened the blowing manhole cover, descended the entrance culvert, and began our first squirmy descent

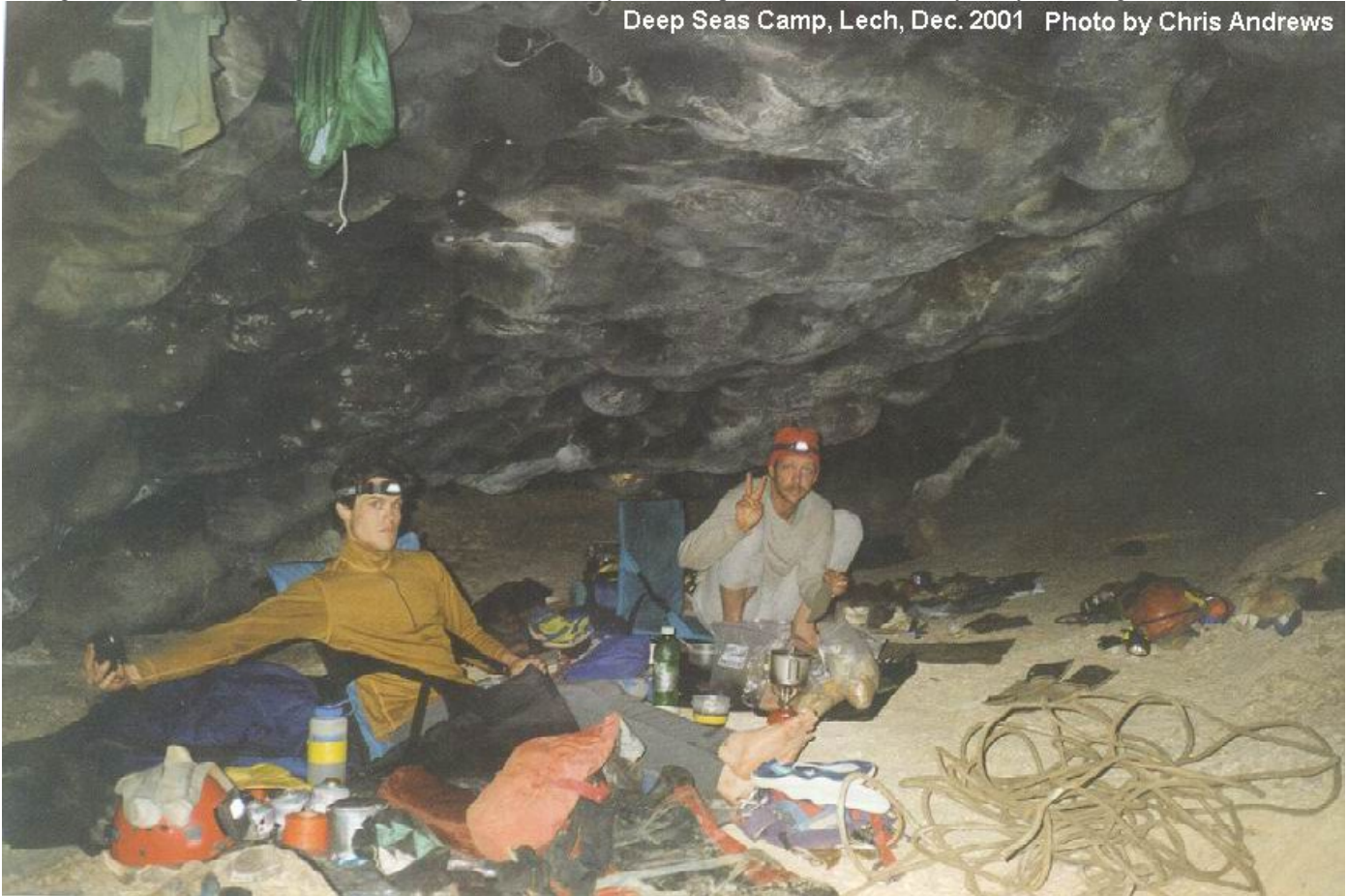
Dec. 2001, Ray Keeler at the entrance to Lechuguilla Cave



passages in the dark.

After seven and a half hours of boulder hopping, shimmying up and down passages, rappelling and ascending fixed ropes, and crawling through tiny passages on our bellies, we made it to our camp in the Huapache Highway room, a giant underground stadium over 1000 feet below the surface filled with a jumble of breakdown. Except for a few glances here and there of the miraculous underground structures, our beeline descent to this magnificent underground chamber hadn't given me the chance to catch my breath to pause to look too closely many of the sights.

Deep Seas Camp, Lech, Dec. 2001 Photo by Chris Andrews



At camp I learned much about the geology of the cave from my teammates Ray Keeler, Peter Jones, and ex-climber-now-caver Jim Erikson. After the limestone bedrock formed millions of years ago, sulfuric acid (H_2SO_4), a potent acid which dissolves limestone {formed by the mixing of hydrogen sulfide (H_2S) created from oil and organic materials beneath the water table and oxygen-rich H_2O from above} created a vast and complex system of spongework mazes and chambers. By the nature of this rare process of the cave forming from the bottom up, H_2S caves constitute a small group of the largest and most beautiful caves in the world. The cave is covered with mineral formations (speleothems): calcite (CaCO_3), which forms into incredible Flowstone, Aragonite bushes, "Soda Straws" and other forms, and snow white Gypsum ($\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$).

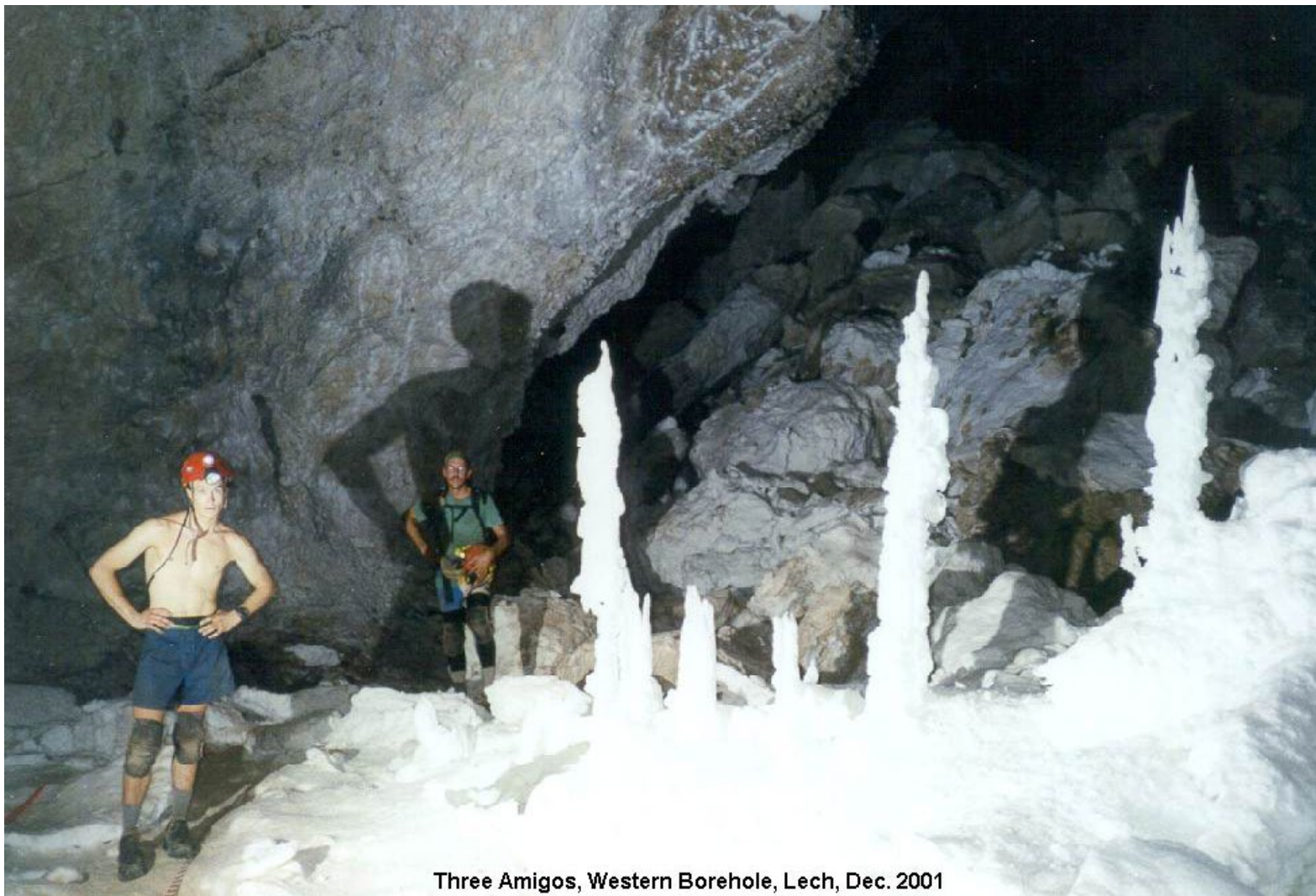


Zanzibar, Lechuguilla Cave

We spent the first underground "day" exploring gypsum rooms in a northern fork of the Western Borehole along the EVI survey (all passageways are designated with letters starting with A and ending with ZZZ). "Rafts", sharp shards of calcite once formed on the surface of ghost underground lakes, coated the floors, and incredible forms of gypsum crystals and angel hair enveloped the walls.

We inched through tight crawlways and chimneyed up walls of gypsum and surveyed almost 400 feet of new passage, which linked areas around "The Private Room", a delicate area filled with gypsum flowers and aragonite bushes. The main ethic in the cave is conservation. In a cave, a misplaced footstep or a muddy hand-print lasts forever and not only ruins a natural masterpiece, but quite possibly can be damaging to the fragile underground ecosystem. It takes great care to prevent damaging the formations and we often went to great lengths to keep the cave pristine.

We continued on for many hours and finally linked up with another passage that had been flagged with orange and blue tape but, unlike most of the survey markers in the cave, had no information indicating where in the cave we were. Although it had already been a long day, we were tempted to continue into unknown territory, though we knew it could mean committing to many hours of tortuous passageways before we could find a return path to our camp. Wisely, our team leader Peter called it off, and we retraced our steps and after many hours returned to our 1000 foot underground camp.



Three Amigos, Western Borehole, Lech, Dec. 2001

The next "morning", we shared information with another team led by Dave Jones, with whom we shared the camp. We had all been working hard the past 48 hours and by now the constant temperature (69 degrees F) and humidity (over 90%) had turned us into true troglobites, and it took me a while to get used to the stank of our bodies in the humid environment. Dave, Lyle, Steve, and Mark had been working on a difficult vertical lead in the area known as the South Winds, a branch of the Western Borehole that has several miles of surveyed passage and likely has many more to find. Dave and Lyle had been pushing leads up a 500 foot vertical gypsum tube leading up and out of a room. They had returned the "night" before after a 14 hour push up the first 375 feet, and were gearing up for another push that day. After wishing each other best of luck with finding a breakthrough, our two teams left in different directions, ours with a new task of probing the far western portion of the cave (the area which lies the most surface miles from



Photo by Chris Andrews

Dec. 2001, Leaning Tower of Lech

the entrance).

The farthest western room of Lechuguilla is the Rainbow Room, at about 600 feet under the surface. We made it there after traveling to the far western end of the Western Borehole and then proceeded to make our way up three or four hundred feet of ever steepening chimneys. It beholds several colors, from white "bacon" calcite, to red chunks of remnant sandstone, to dark manganese oxide corrosion. From there, we found and surveyed 400 feet of new passage, much of which continued, but became too small for a human explorer. We chimneyed down and we chimneyed up, much of which through walls covered with a 1/2" clay like layer of the so-called "gorilla shit", the manganese oxide residue that resembles slick mud. I was surprised at how much fun it was complaining about how miserable it was getting covered with the stuff from head to toe.

The third day we found a new side spur near the Long Haul which Peter called the "Velvet Underground". We surveyed and walked through halls covered with great slabs of flowstone that sparkled and resembled plush orange velvet. Jim and I explored some vertical leads: I soloed up a 30 foot boulder problem that ended up leading nowhere and Jim found a chimney covered with flowstone and soloed up it for as far as the light could see. Jim is an exacting caver and moves with the precision of a cat on tight vertical climbing leads; still, I felt a bit of worry as his light became dimmer and

dimmer and finally disappeared 100 feet straight above me. A while later, Jim downclimbed back down to us with the information that the chimney got too tight after a while.

We decide to make for the surface. Although we had managed to survey over 1300 feet of new passage over the past 3 days, we still felt a bit discouraged that none of the new passage led to any spectacular larger rooms. Plus we knew that at that moment Dave and his team were on the verge of a big breakout in the South Winds. We wanted to join them but had made pre-arrangement to report back to the Park Service after five days, so we began our two day ascent return to the entrance.

That night we shared the Deep Seas camp with two other teams. They had also found new passage, but no major breakouts. They had come from the South Winds and had heard that Dave and Lyle had indeed found some major passage but didn't know the details. The next morning Ray, Jim and I started to make our way back up the final 900 feet, with Peter and the other teams following shortly behind.

Somehow toward the end, I found myself in the lead position. After 91 hours underground, I experienced the notorious "entrance fever", and when I heard the first whoosh of air being sucked out of the entrance hole, I hurriedly stumbled upward to the final tube, ran up the final overhanging rope ascent to the surface, and yelped for joy, stunned by the vibrant colors and the magnificent smell of fresh air.



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Cuba Travels 12/27/00 to 1/4/01

Arriving in Havana came only after an epic travel experience with storms, cancelled flights, and a 600 mile, all-night drive. Frantic to reach Miami in time for the charter flight (which had taken a month and countless phone calls to procure), I had driven from my sister's home in Monroe, Louisiana, to Tallahassee, where I made a flight to Miami with 4 minutes to spare. I left the rent-a-car on the tarmac and made it on the plane just as doors were closing. In the Miami airport, I joined Casey Gardner, my friend and ex-financee, and soon after we were in the plane heading south to the island nation.

When we arrived in Havana, late in the night, Cuban climbers Anibal, Carlos, and Vitalio met us at the airport and deposited us in a casa particular (in fact, Carlos' Aunt's house). It was beautiful waking up to a new land, and quite exciting to have a week of no plans with good friends to share. Anibal came by in the morning and took us out for coffee. We asked about a sit-down cafe, and Anibal told us, "you will have coffee as we Cubans do". On a busy street, we found a woman selling coffee in small cups from a pushcart and drank several shots of coffee, standing amidst the chaos of a Havana tenement district. Anibal then took us for a fantastic all-day walking tour of Havana. We walked for miles around the city, saw the remarkable colonial, baroque, and art deco buildings of Havana, strolled the Paseo de Prada and the Malecon, and learned the history of Havana. Anibal told us also of his life and dreams--and we discovered that he is an amazing man for only 20 years, with a sensitivity for beauty, and a spiritual curiosity that was intriguing. A few years before, he had been to Europe on a climbing trip, thanks to an invitation from a European Alpine Club, and we realized how the freedom to travel was truly a privilege.

Later, we met with his mother Esther, and we understood Anibal's sense of the world better. Esther was a well-known Cuban actress, currently engaged in establishing a theatre and dance troupe in Havana. A sophisticated woman with a fine taste for the arts, Esther had a close bond with Anibal, her only son. Growing up, Anibal had been exposed to rich cultural experiences with his mother. His first climb was with a European friend of Esther, who had taken them both climbing one day. We were invited to stay at her house, which we gladly accepted. Her home was beautiful and refined, with lovely paintings and inspirational sculpture, and a wonderful central courtyard which she had designed and built. At dinner she told us of her ideas with the theatre troupe. The passion of her ideas shone as she described in detail over dinner a performance with masked actors reveling in the primordial essence of freedom from the bonds of identity. She also told us of several great Cuban films, "Lucia" and "Undeveloped Memories", and I hope to see them someday.

The next day Anibal took us climbing at the Castillo Morro with Jorge, a spirited young Cuban and a proud father of a 2-month old baby. When we arrived at the castle, after taking the "Camel", a converted missile carrier- come-bus, the waves were crashing madly. We looked at the easiest route there, the "Corner" (actually an arete), which was the first rock climb of Castillo Morro, and frequently a wave would crash on the wall and splash most of the route. Suddenly, Anibal said, "Let's go for it!" and we set up the rope. My turn was first, and after lowering down into the crashing surf I was certain that a wave would wash me off the rock at any moment. The wall shuddered with each wave and I imagined it could suddenly collapse. Making it to the top with the adrenaline flowing, and shaky after my first climb in many many months, I began to feel like a climber once more. Anibal went next, then Casey and Jorge.

Next we prowled around the castle looking for routes. The caretaker of the castle likes and appreciates the

climbers, and allows them to place anchors in the castle walls. In return, the climbers are quite respectful and camouflage all signs of the gear. We climbed an arete (which threw my shoulder out), and later, Casey and Jorge top roped a corner for which in lieu of any rock anchor, we set up a two-person anchor system, fun for all. Then we visited the castle and climbed the steps of the great lighthouse, where we were blessed with an incredible view of the ocean and city. We finished off the day with a nice roof problem top rope, then back to the city in an original 1908 Ford. Later that night we had dinner with Anibal and his girlfriend Heidi, who is studying film. Her thesis project is a documentary on the chance-ness of life and her description of her screenplay was beautiful and insightful and made me realize that the intellectual life in Cuba is alive and strong.

The next day we hired a car to Vinales, the main climbing area. We gave Carlos a lift to San Cristobal, where he was visiting family for the New Years. The next day in Vinales, New Year's eve, was quite mellow. We met with Isaias, a local climber, and walked to the beautiful Mohotes, the limestone domes which pervade the region and offer the excellent climbing opportunities. We bouldered on the sharp rock beneath the beautiful Mohotes.



New Year's eve we took a trip to the beach--magic--we took a taxi to the gate of Cayo Julius, and began a 4 mile walk to the beach. Soon, a busload of young French students pulled alongside, asking us if we needed a ride. We couldn't believe it, it felt so out of place. It turned out to be a group of volunteers organized by Colette Lavergne, who took students on a 2 week adventure to Cuba where they work in the country with the Cubans, and experience the communities. We had a fine time on the beach, I made balance sculptures with the seashells, and Casey read and walked. It was chilly so neither of us ventured into the water. That night we returned to Vinales and had a wonderful dinner at our Casa Particular managed by Graciella. Truly we felt like we were in paradise. The next day Isaias took us climbing and we climbed several routes on the Mohotes. That evening Anibal, Vitalio and Nanny arrived, and we met up with Armando and Laura, Jim Donini and Angela, and we had a fine night of dancing and drinking seven year old rum in the local pub with live Cuban music. We attempted the Cuban Dance steps and had a wonderful circle where we all danced in a circle and one of us would do a little stint in the center when it



came our turn.

The next day we all went out to a larger cliff, and Jim dragged me up a difficult overhanging route, which I fell off several times. The most enjoyable part of the day was reading the Spanish version of Dr. Seuss's Huevos Verde con Hamon with Anibal--a real treat! We had to leave the fun scene mid-day, as our ride to Havana was leaving at 3. We had a nice trip to Havana, and the next day we visited the Museum of the Revolution, several art galleries, and wandered the Plaza de Armes, perusing the wonderful used book stands. In the evening we flew home.

A wonderful trip with wonderful people. I hope to return soon!!

[Click here for photos of the trip!](#)



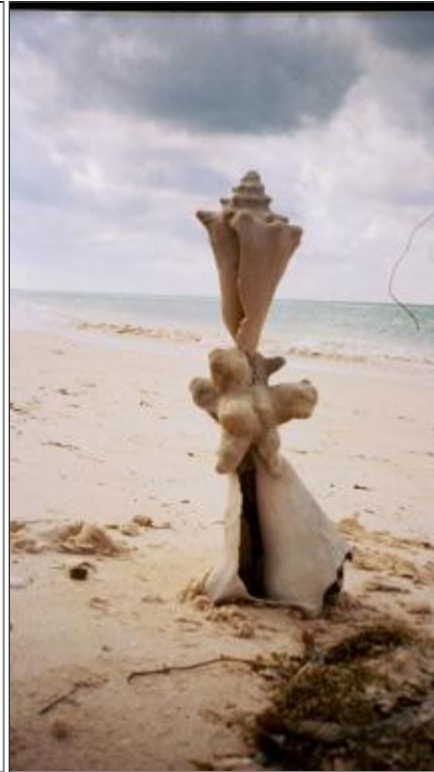
Our Ride in Havana



Anibal says, "let's go for it!"



Climbing on Castillo Morro



One of my sea shell sculptures



Casey, my ex-finacee, friend, and travel partner



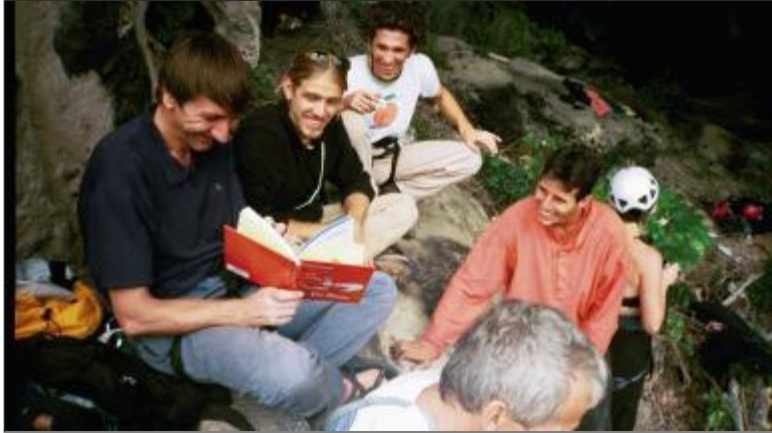
Typical Cuban rig



Vinales



Mohotes



Reading Dr. Seuss, Huevos Verde con Hamon



Armando, the man who makes it all possible



The climbing



Vitalio signing a wonderful homemade fifi



Nanny and Angela



Smoking Carlos's Cuban Cigars at Graciella's



Isaiah our fearless guide



Cruiser in Havana

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Escudo

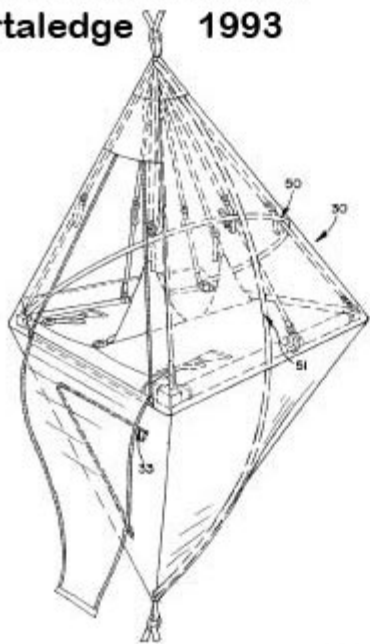
In 1994, the 4000 foot East Face of Escudo in the Torre de Paine group in Patagonia got climbed by Brad Jarrett, Christian Santelices, and Chris Breemer.

John Middendorf had explored the area in 1992 with his girlfriend at the time, and had shared the photo of the unclimbed face with Brad Jarret. The original 1992 photo is shown below:



Also around that time, John Middendorf had also recently developed the first “Diamond Ledge” created specifically for situations where severe winds were encountered (wind travels up walls!). It had a structurally reinforced fly (webbing suspensions) on top and bottom to enable vertically opposed anchoring to counteract the severe winds found in Patagonia (it had the added bonus of allowing a third team member to bivy in the lower compartment). John had developed the Diamond Ledge for a 1993 attempt on the East Face of Cerro Torre, but his partner had declined to attempt it (instead they did the Compressor Route). But the following year, John was happy to share the new technology with Brad and his team. Their successful ascent was really the first time a major big wall style climb had been done in Patagonia without recourse to extensive fixed ropes. This is called “Alpine Style Big Wall Climbing” where there is no safety tether to the ground and involves much higher levels of commitment.

**Middendorf Diamond
Portaledge 1993**



Below is the report from the 1995 AAJ:

Escudo, East Face, Paine Group.

In early December, 1994, Brad Jarrett, Christian Santelices and I arrived at the Japanese Camp, high in the Río Ascensio valley. From that base, we made carries up the two-hour approach to the foot of the east wall of Cerro Escudo. We spied a vague system of cracks that we hoped would lead us up the 4000-foot wall. On December 17, with two ropes fixed and 500 pounds at the foot of the face, we began a continuous push for the summit. Christian and I shivered the first night as Brad drilled a ladder of rivets to the base of a large roof. Using it as a protection from falling rock and ice, we erected our portaledge under it and crawled in to wait out a 36-hour storm. Rather than the standard single point suspension, our portaledge was anchored from the top and bottom, protecting us from wildly erratic winds and strong updrafts. When the storm abated, we began climbing along a series of thin and discontinuous cracks. Averaging only one pitch a day, we climbed continuously through unsettled weather to the base of an enormous detached flake we dubbed the Red Tower. On Christmas Eve, with our portaledge established beneath the Red Tower, we climbed the right side of the tower. On one of those pitches, Christian crawled out of his aiders, squeezed through a tight crack and found himself inside a 200-foot chimney. Climbing through the dark netherworld, he eventually reached a large ledge at the top of the Red Tower. Two more pitches of moderate aid climbing brought us to a broken ledge system, where we reconstructed our portaledge camp. Wearing rubberized rainpants, paddling jackets and neoprene gloves, we suffered through two pitches in the direct path of a meltwater seep. It was great to retreat to the sanctuary of our portaledge where we had dry clothes, a stereo, books and even a few beers. Two pitches higher, we were at the base of a broken series of overhangs that offered protection. We reestablished our portaledge there. Blue skies the next morning provided

perfect conditions for climbing and condor watching. Above the overhangs, Brad started up the hardest pitch of the route. Over the course of ten hours, using beaks, copperheads and shaky pitons, he crossed a number of loose flakes, a very sharp-edged roof and series of loose blocks. A fall on that pitch would have had dire consequences. Finally on January 3, 1995, we were ready for the summit push. Crawling out of the portaledge, we jumared to the top of our rope, where Christian began leading up a hidden corner. There he discovered icy cracks, loose blocks and rotten rock. The next pitch was the same. At 2:30 A.M. on January 4, we stepped over the small cornice that divides the west and east faces of the Escudo. Exhausted after 19 days on the wall, we elected to forgo a visit to the true summit and instead began 4000 feet of rappelling. We arrived 24 hours later on the glacier. (VII, 5.10, A4+.) We have named our route The Dream as tribute to Mugs Stump and as a description of our state of mind after 20 days on the wall.

Chris Breemer

Below is the photo that Chris sent to John Middendorf after their ascent:



Cerro Escudo

"The Dream" VII A4+ 5.10

Photo: Chris Breemer

Below is an aerial photo of the Torre Del Paine:



Since that time, the A5 Diamond Ledge was used on a number of successful big wall ascents (in fact the huge boom in big wall standards in the 1990's all were aided by the new fully stormproof hanging bivouac technology provided by A5 Adventures.



Above: Mark Synnott in a breathable A5 Diamond Fly.

[RETURN TO Bigwalls.net](http://Bigwalls.net)

Kinnaur Wall—new route by Silvia Vidal
by John Middendorf

In 2004 my wife and I travelled to a remote area in India, near the border with China. We camped in the beautiful Kinnaur Valley, where we were pretty much the only tourists (I think the area had just been recently opened up to tourism).

Above the valley, I spotted a shield of rock unlike most of the more ragged mountains in the area—a beautiful wall! Naturally I would love to have made plans to climb it, but instead I was following a new passion of creating a family!



(above: my photo from our world trip)

I posted the photos on my bigwalls.net website but I did not disclose the location! I offered a free A5 Big Wall Hammer, a hard-to-find big wall tool at the time, to anyone who could figure out the location. I gave a few clues, but it took 5 years to solve the mystery! “Goatboy” won the hammer in 2009.

See [BigWallForum archive \(pdf\)](#) for the chain of events.



(above: Goatboy's winning entry)

Then in 2010, Silvia Vidal, whom I had supported and featured in an A5 catalog back when I ran A5 Adventures, the big wall outfitters, sent me an email asking for more details. I gave her more information and she was off, solo, to climb the first ascent of the wall (I think I also arranged a portaledge for her!).



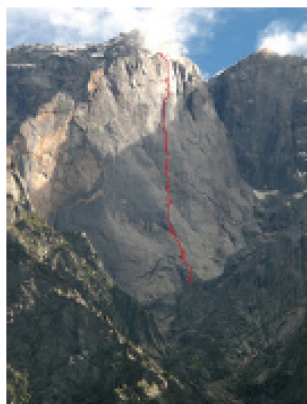
Silvia Vidal on pitch 6 of her Naufrazi, Kinnaur Valley, India
Photo by [Silvia Vidal](#)

zoom ↗



Camp 1 beneath the big roof at 6450m
Photo by [Silvia Vidal](#)

zoom ↗



The line of Naufrazi (1050m, A4+/6a+) in the Kinnaur Valley, India
Photo by [Marc Martin Linares](#)

zoom ↗

Silvia Vidal, Naufrazi big wall in Kinnaur Valley, India

From 15/08/2010 to 08/09/2010 big wall specialist Silvia Vidal from Spain established Naufrazi (1050m, A4+/6a+) in the Kinnaur Valley, India

Big wall. Aid climbing. Alone. This is what immediately springs to mind when you hear the name Silvia Vidal, and after hanging out with the boys on Baffin Island last September, this summer the climber from Catalonia lived her dream once again spending 25 days along on a remote, unnamed wall in the Kinnaur Valley, Himachal Pradesh, India, establishing "Naufrazi" (1050m, A4+/6a+). Her report is published below. What is worth underlining is A4+ established solo, at 5250m, during one of the worst monsoons in living memory... easy to understand why she felt shipwrecked and opted against continuing to the main summit.

Naufrazi by Silvia Vidal

Here is some information about the last ascent I did this summer in Kinnaur Valley, India. It was a solo ascent and I spent 25 days (from 15th August to 8th September included) on the wall, during this summer's strong monsoon. It was a tough experience for me. I travelled to India accompanied by my friend Eulàlia Sancho, she accompanied me to BC and then left to continue her trip. As always I didn't take a phone, Internet or any kind of device to communicate.

The result was "Naufrazi" (shipwreck in Catalan), 1050 meters high, A4+/6a+ at 5250m in the Kailash Parbat range. I didn't reach the main summit which was still distant - the mountain is huge and I didn't even manage to see the top - but I reached the end of the main wall.

All the information I had was a picture of the wall and where it was located on Google Earth which I had found on John Middendorf's webpage. Once in the valley, I didn't know where to start the approach so I showed the picture to the locals and after having hired some porters, we started walking in the rain.

The porters dropped the haulbags in the fog at 3800m and then left. During the 7 days I spent at this BC I never saw the entire wall, and I spent two days trying to access the wall because there was zero visibility and I had no idea where it was. I had to fix some ropes on the way up as the approach was like trying to hike up a river ravine. Complicated and slippery.

I established ABC (4430m) close to the wall, a portaledge hanging on a boulder, because there was no flat outcrop to place the tent between BC and the base of the wall. I fixed the 3 first pitches (150m) and then spent 25 days on the wall, alone, in horrible weather, because this year the monsoon was particularly bad. From the month and a half that I spent up on the mountain, there was rain and fog every single day. A local newspaper stated that the Kinnaur valley received 156% more rain than usual this year.

I climbed some completely natural A4 and A4+, but on some sections there was no natural line for extreme aid climbing and so, fighting against my principles, from the 10th pitch (14 day) onwards I started to drill some bat hooks - holes for the aid hooks - to progress through the monolithic face. I didn't do this to increase the aid climbing grade, but because otherwise I wouldn't have been able to continue upwards. That's the price I had to pay for going on an expedition without knowing anything about the area or the wall.

One day, when jumaring, I lost consciousness, due to hypothermia because of excess of humidity. I had rationed food and water for 18 days and in the end I spent 25 days up there. This and the bad logistics were the reason that thoughts of quitting crossed my mind on various occasions. At one point I down-climbed part of a pitch but then I realised that I didn't want to leave the wall, I was too motivated to leave despite the terrible weather and all the hard work I had put in. I always believed the weather was going to change, but it didn't...

Naufrazi
Kinnaur Valley, Kailash Parbat range, India
Altitude: 5250m
ABC: 4430m
Route length: 1050m
Wall camps: 2
Grade: A4+/6a+
Days on the wall: 25

Her report is also found here:

<http://www.planetmountain.com/english/News/shownews1.lasso?keyid=37673>

On November 15, 2010, I received this email:

To: John Middendorf
thanks

Hi John,

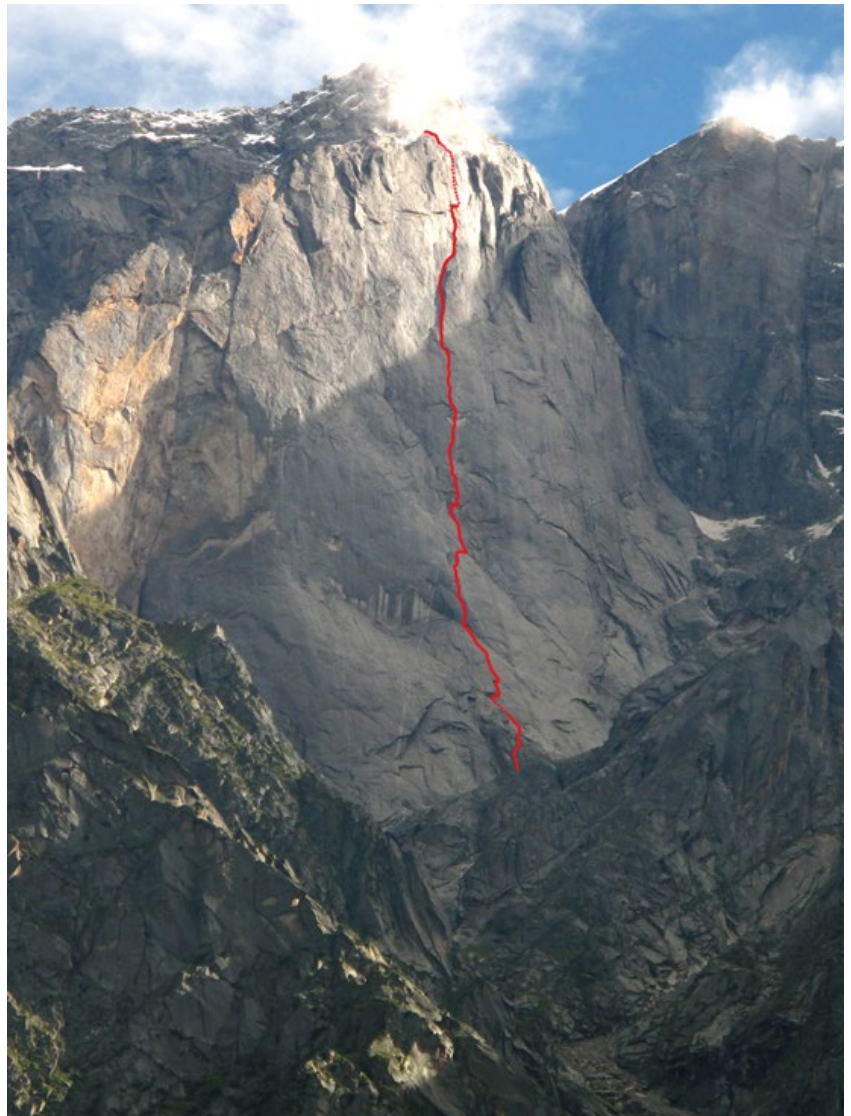
Did you received the picture with the line and the information?

I just want to say you: THANK YOU very much.
It was amazing to find this picture at your web site.
Thanks John for all your help that allowed me to live such an incredible experience.

Hug
Sílvia

Here is some information about the last ascent I did this summer in Kinnaur Valley, India. It was a solo ascent and I spent 25 days (from 15th August to 8th September both included) on the wall, during this summer's strong monsoon. It has been a hard experience for me. I went to India accompanied by my friend Eulàlia Sancho, she came to the BC and then left to continue her trip. As always I didn't take a phone, Internet or any kind of device to communicate. The result was "Naufragi" (shipwreck in Catalan) 1.050 meters climbed, A4+/6a+ at 5.250m. in the Kailash Parbat range. I didn't get to the main summit of the mountain, which was still far away (I haven't seen it, it's a huge mountain), but to the end of the main wall. A wall picture and its localization on Google Earth was all the information I had. I found it at John Middendorf's web page. The area; Kinnaur valley, Himachal Pradesh, India. Without knowing where to start the approach, once in the valley, showing the picture to the locals and taking some porters, we started to walk up in the middle of the rain. They left the haulbags in the middle of the fog at 3.800m and left. In the 7 days that I spent on this BC I never saw the whole wall. I spent two days trying to find the access to the wall because there was no visibility and I had no idea where the wall was. I had to fix some ropes on the way up. The approach to the wall is like trying to hike up a river ravine.

Complicated and slippery. I set ABC (4.430m) close to the wall, the portaledge hanging on a boulder, because there was no flat place to put the tent between the BC and the base of the wall. I fixed the 3 first pitches (150m) and then spent 25 days hanging on the wall, alone, in horrible weather, because this year the monsoon has been very strong. A local newspaper published that the Kinnaur valley got 156% more rain than usual this year. From the month and a half that I spent up on the mountain, there was rain and fog every single day. One day, when jumaring, I lost consciousness, due to hypothermia because of excess of humidity. I counted food and water for 18 days and finally I spent 25. This and a bad logistic were the reason that more than once I thought to quit the route. But the motivation and



the desire to stay there were stronger. Fighting against my principles, from the 10th pitch (14 day) I started to make bat hooks (holes for hooks) to be able to progress through the monolithic faces. In some sections there was no natural line for extreme aid climbing. I didn't have enough bolts (spits) and I wasn't able to descent from the route only for that reason. I down climbed part of a pitch but then I realised that I didn't want to leave the wall, I was too motivated to leave even if the weather was so bad and it took me too much efforts so far. I always thought that the weather was going to change, but it didn't... I tried not to use the bat hooks to increase the aid climbing grade. I mean; the A4 and A4+ are naturals, without drilled holes. That's the price I had to pay for going on an expedition without knowing about the area and the wall. And I need to explain it.

Alls well that ends well!

[RETURN TO Bigwalls.net](http://Bigwalls.net)

North Face of Polar Sun Spire



In July of 1996, Mark Synnott, Warren Hollinger, and Jeff Chapman completed the first ascent of the North Face of Polar Sun Spire in Baffin Island, a Grade VII route which involved 36 days of climbing (26 day final continuous push).



The A5 Diamond Ledge in action



Jeff and Warren on the route. Photo by Mark Synnott.

I N H A L T

TRANGO

Durch die Ostflanke des Great Trango Tower führte bisher eine einzige Route: jene der Norweger Doseth und Daehli. Es sollte acht Jahre dauern, bis der Schweizer Xaver Bongard und der Amerikaner John Middendorf einen zweiten Weg fanden. Wetterumschwünge, Lawinengefahr und elend schwere Haubitags waren die ständigen Begleiter ihrer Expedition. Als am 28. Juli 1992 auf dem Gipfel standen, lagen 16 Tage Bigwall-Kletterei hinter ihnen. "The Grand Voyage"...

Seite 80



Foto: autor

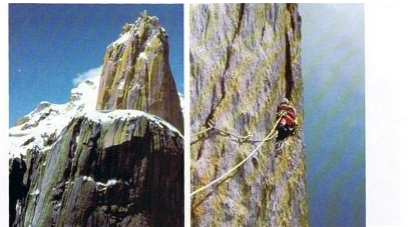
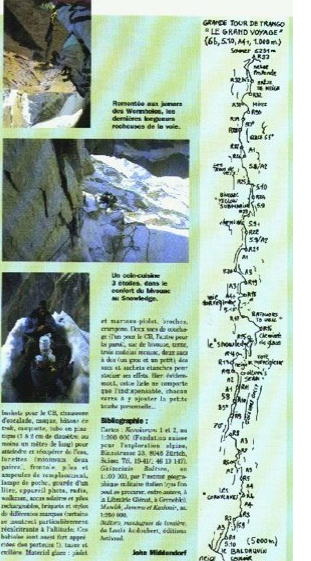
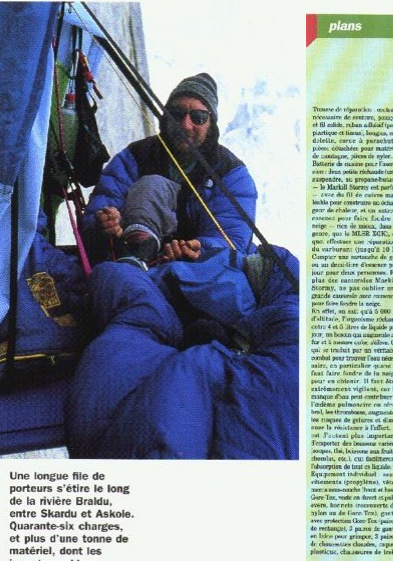
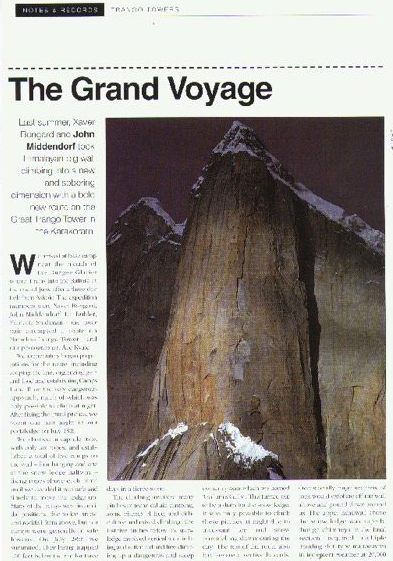
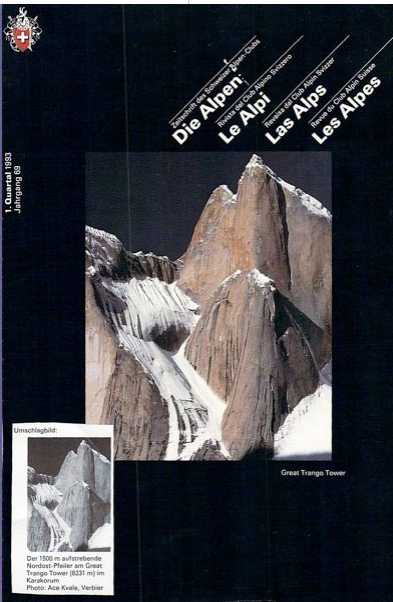
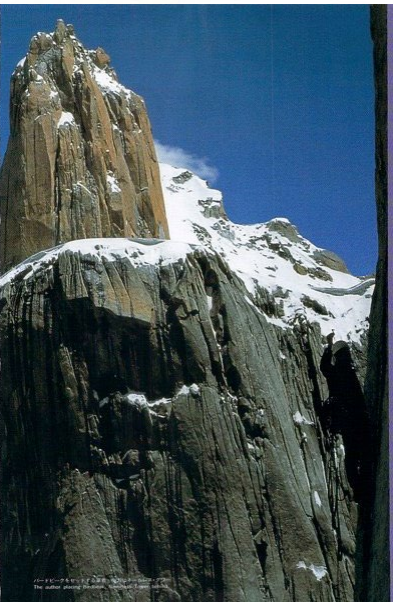
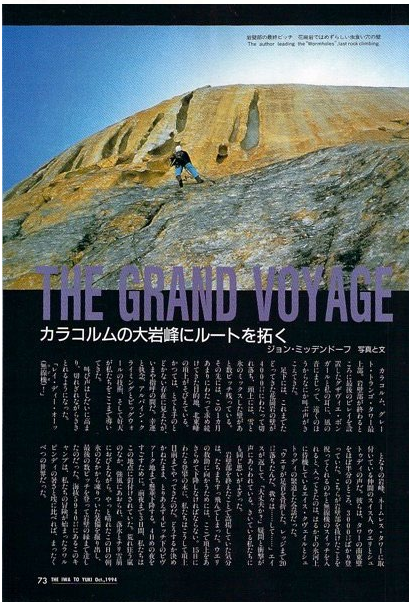
John Molderdorp, na jehož zájmu o výstavbu, patří ke světově elitě lidí "tehných lidí". Investorem 17) (er) byl čas od času velkých architektů, například Christiano Bontade, 1985. A. H. A. S. 5. a 6. a 7. a 8. a 9. a 10. a 11. a 12. a 13. a 14. a 15. a 16. a 17. a 18. a 19. a 20. a 21. a 22. a 23. a 24. a 25. a 26. a 27. a 28. a 29. a 30. a 31. a 32. a 33. a 34. a 35. a 36. a 37. a 38. a 39. a 40. a 41. a 42. a 43. a 44. a 45. a 46. a 47. a 48. a 49. a 50. a 51. a 52. a 53. a 54. a 55. a 56. a 57. a 58. a 59. a 60. a 61. a 62. a 63. a 64. a 65. a 66. a 67. a 68. a 69. a 70. a 71. a 72. a 73. a 74. a 75. a 76. a 77. a 78. a 79. a 80. a 81. a 82. a 83. a 84. a 85. a 86. a 87. a 88. a 89. a 90. a 91. a 92. a 93. a 94. a 95. a 96. a 97. a 98. a 99. a 100. a 101. a 102. a 103. a 104. a 105. a 106. a 107. a 108. a 109. a 110. a 111. a 112. a 113. a 114. a 115. a 116. a 117. a 118. a 119. a 120. a 121. a 122. a 123. a 124. a 125. a 126. a 127. a 128. a 129. a 130. a 131. a 132. a 133. a 134. a 135. a 136. a 137. a 138. a 139. a 140. a 141. a 142. a 143. a 144. a 145. a 146. a 147. a 148. a 149. a 150. a 151. a 152. a 153. a 154. a 155. a 156. a 157. a 158. a 159. a 160. a 161. a 162. a 163. a 164. a 165. a 166. a 167. a 168. a 169. a 170. a 171. a 172. a 173. a 174. a 175. a 176. a 177. a 178. a 179. a 180. a 181. a 182. a 183. a 184. a 185. a 186. a 187. a 188. a 189. a 190. a 191. a 192. a 193. a 194. a 195. a 196. a 197. a 198. a 199. a 200. a 201. a 202. a 203. a 204. a 205. a 206. a 207. a 208. a 209. a 210. a 211. a 212. a 213. a 214. a 215. a 216. a 217. a 218. a 219. a 220. a 221. a 222. a 223. a 224. a 225. a 226. a 227. a 228. a 229. a 230. a 231. a 232. a 233. a 234. a 235. a 236. a 237. a 238. a 239. a 240. a 241. a 242. a 243. a 244. a 245. a 246. a 247. a 248. a 249. a 250. a 251. a 252. a 253. a 254. a 255. a 256. a 257. a 258. a 259. a 260. a 261. a 262. a 263. a 264. a 265. a 266. a 267. a 268. a 269. a 270. a 271. a 272. a 273. a 274. a 275. a 276. a 277. a 278. a 279. a 280. a 281. a 282. a 283. a 284. a 285. a 286. a 287. a 288. a 289. a 290. a 291. a 292. a 293. a 294. a 295. a 296. a 297. a 298. a 299. a 300. a 301. a 302. a 303. a 304. a 305. a 306. a 307. a 308. a 309. a 310. a 311. a 312. a 313. a 314. a 315. a 316. a 317. a 318. a 319. a 320. a 321. a 322. a 323. a 324. a 325. a 326. a 327. a 328. a 329. a 330. a 331. a 332. a 333. a 334. a 335. a 336. a 337. a 338. a 339. a 340. a 341. a 342. a 343. a 344. a 345. a 346. a 347. a 348. a 349. a 350. a 351. a 352. a 353. a 354. a 355. a 356. a 357. a 358. a 359. a 360. a 361. a 362. a 363. a 364. a 365. a 366. a 367. a 368. a 369. a 370. a 371. a 372. a 373. a 374. a 375. a 376. a 377. a 378. a 379. a 380. a 381. a 382. a 383. a 384. a 385. a 386. a 387. a 388. a 389. a 390. a 391. a 392. a 393. a 394. a 395. a 396. a 397. a 398. a 399. a 400. a 401. a 402. a 403. a 404. a 405. a 406. a 407. a 408. a 409. a 410. a 411. a 412. a 413. a 414. a 415. a 416. a 417. a 418. a 419. a 420. a 421. a 422. a 423. a 424. a 425. a 426. a 427. a 428. a 429. a 430. a 431. a 432. a 433. a 434. a 435. a 436. a 437. a 438. a 439. a 440. a 441. a 442. a 443. a 444. a 445. a 446. a 447. a 448. a 449. a 450. a 451. a 452. a 453. a 454. a 455. a 456. a 457. a 458. a 459. a 460. a 461. a 462. a 463. a 464. a 465. a 466. a 467. a 468. a 469. a 470. a 471. a 472. a 473. a 474. a 475. a 476. a 477. a 478. a 479. a 480. a 481. a 482. a 483. a 484. a 485. a 486. a 487. a 488. a 489. a 490. a 491. a 492. a 493. a 494. a 495. a 496. a 497. a 498. a 499. a 500. a 501. a 502. a 503. a 504. a 505. a 506. a 507. a 508. a 509. a 510. a 511. a 512. a 513. a 514. a 515. a 516. a 517. a 518. a 519. a 520. a 521. a 522. a 523. a 524. a 525. a 526. a 527. a 528. a 529. a 530. a 531. a 532. a 533. a 534. a 535. a 536. a 537. a 538. a 539. a 540. a 541. a 542. a 543. a 544. a 545. a 546. a 547. a 548. a 549. a 550. a 551. a 552. a 553. a 554. a 555. a 556. a 557. a 558. a 559. a 560. a 561. a 562. a 563. a 564. a 565. a 566. a 567. a 568. a 569. a 570. a 571. a 572. a 573. a 574. a 575. a 576. a 577. a 578. a 579. a 580. a 581. a 582. a 583. a 584. a 585. a 586. a 587. a 588. a 589. a 590. a 591. a 592. a 593. a 594. a 595. a 596. a 597. a 598. a 599. a 600. a 601. a 602. a 603. a 604. a 605. a 606. a 607. a 608. a 609. a 610. a 611. a 612. a 613. a 614. a 615. a 616. a 617. a 618. a 619. a 620. a 621. a 622. a 623. a 624. a 625. a 626. a 627. a 628. a 629. a 630. a 631. a 632. a 633. a 634. a 635. a 636. a 637. a 638. a 639. a 640. a 641. a 642. a 643. a 644. a 645. a 646. a 647. a 648. a 649. a 650. a 651. a 652. a 653. a 654. a 655. a 656. a 657. a 658. a 659. a 660. a 661. a 662. a 663. a 664. a 665. a 666. a 667. a 668. a 669. a 670. a 671. a 672. a 673. a 674. a 675. a 676. a 677. a 678. a 679. a 680. a 681. a 682. a 683. a 684. a 685. a 686. a 687. a 688. a 689. a 69

Velká cesta

John Middendorf

<p>"Čekali mohli udlít, anebo snít, že mohli udlít, začni to. Odvaha má v sobě genialitu, sílu a kouzlo."</p> <p>J.W. Goethe</p>	<p>jme vpadl do rádiového rozhovoru mezi Studi a Aca Kuzlem, kteří byli na Indovci daleko dle: Uli má rozšířilý katník. Spadl dvacet stop na plotu. Jmé v p...!!</p> <p>podmínka začala.</p> <p>Skon</p>
--	--

trifone klavíra, když jsem se na Kawer Bangard odpravil, že jsem se tam nikdy nešel. Když jsem se vrátil z Toweru v Krasově, měl nad sebou nádhernou lásku, kterou jsem nikdy neviděl. Když jsem se vrátil z Toweru, měl nad sebou nádhernou lásku, kterou jsem nikdy neviděl. Když jsem se vrátil z Toweru, měl nad sebou nádhernou lásku, kterou jsem nikdy neviděl.

[illegible]

Report of the 1995 Gahrwal Himalayan Expedition.

Photo: The unclimbed face of Bhagaratti IV (left), and Bhagaratti III.

Our trip did not go according to plan. Silvo Karo and I arrived in Delhi on August 28 and proceeded to deal with the paperwork and preparation for our trip into the Gahrwal Himalaya, where we intended to attempt a big wall route on the west face of Bhagirathi IV and the Shark's Fin on Meru.

We had hired an agency, Rucksack Tours, to handle our expedition for US\$900 per person. After 11 days in Delhi, we came to the realization that we had been taken by Rani Puri, the proprietor of Rucksack Tours. To make a long story short, Silvo had been blacklisted from climbing in India the year before due to misinformation Rani Puri had given him concerning his permit from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation which had caused a report to be filed to the Ministry of Home Affairs (with whom one must have approval before the IMF will issue a mountaineering permit) against Silvo. Even though Rani Puri was well aware that Silvo had been blacklisted (a letter dated April, 1995 had been sent from the IMF to Rucksack Tours stating such), she repeatedly told us that there would be no problem with the permit this year, it was only a matter of time. We finally realized that the main kickback to Rani Puri's corrupt scheme was to keep us put up in an expensive hotel for as long as possible. In final desperation I had it out with the Director of the IMF and the final answer was a unquestionable NO, I asked him, "What can we do without a permit, then?". He responded with a curt, "Go home." and walked away.



During the ensuing rickshaw ride in heavy monsoon rains with our morale quite subdued, we made the decision to get our money back from Rucksack Tours (they refused to return \$200) and sneak into the mountains regardless of the consequences. After traveling to Uttar-Kashi, buying provisions, and hiring porters, we made our way to Gangotri where we began our trek into the mountains and set up Basecamp at Nandanban ("Place of Heaven") at 14,500' on September 12. During the next week we acclimatized and carried 3 -4 loads each to our advanced base camp at the foot of Bhagirathi IV at 16,000'.

During this time, several other expeditions were attempting peaks from Nandanban. There was a Korean team who had a member die in an avalanche on Bhagirathi II. Two Indian teams were there, including a Bengali team who were eventually successful in both summiting Bhagirathi II and making a huge mess at basecamp. On September 15 or 16 a Canadian team showed up whose goal was to climb the Scottish Pillar on Bhagirathi III, a route which shared the same advanced basecamp (ABC) as ours. Each of these teams were official and had a bona-fide permit from the IMF, and therefore, had a Liaison Officer camping with them. The L.O.'s job is to maintain law and order in the mountains.

Our presence was questioned frequently. We explained that we were trekking. By and by, various liaison officers who came by our camp recognized us as the two who spent days and days in the IMF office trying unsuccessfully to get a permit. India has strict penalties for disregard of the law and since we were obviously did not have a permit to climb, what were we doing there day after day? Trekkers generally moved camp more frequently. In India, if the answer is no, people are expected to take it as that and not ask further questions.

So it became clear to us that our intentions were obvious. In addition, I had hurt my lower back while building a rock wall of our kitchen at basecamp and was having trouble carrying 20 kg loads from our ABC to the base of the wall. On

September 20 we were ready to commit to the wall and began our final approach to our ABC. As we left Nandanban we passed the Bengali team who became suspicious and followed us.

I then made the call not to go for it. Silvo agreed, as if we had continued past ABC we would surely have seen trouble with the Indian authorities. We spent the next few days bringing our 150 kg of equipment and food down from ABC. We then cleaned up our basecamp at Nandanban, hired 3 porters, and crossed the Gangotri glacier with our gear and set up a new basecamp at Topovan ("Place of meditation), right next to our American friends, Steve Quinlan and Dave Anderson, who were getting poised for their ascent of B.IV. We gave them some of our extra equipment. We now planned to climb a 500 meter rock buttress at the base of the south side of Shivling. We believed it to be within the rules of trekking, and it seemed like a worthy project. We also considered sneaking up the Meru glacier for a crack at the Shark's Fin.

After a few days at Topovan, a group of 4 military men came to our site and demanded papers. It then became very clear that we were not receiving a very warm welcome to the area, so we left, frustrated, on September 26. Silvo left for Delhi immediately, but I spent 4 days in Uttar-Kashi, cragging with the local chaps at Mt Support.

In Delhi, I spent 12 hours at the airport and luckily found an excellent Nepali chess player to pass the time with (he beat me soundly 2 out of 3 games). On October 2 I returned to my house in Hurricane, Utah at 3:00 am after 30 hours of traveling 1/2 way around the world. Though we were denied a climbing adventure, the trip was a once-in-a-lifetime experience and is etched upon my mind. Many thanks to my sponsors who made it possible.

-John Middendorf

EXPENSES FOR TRIP OUTLINED

- Airfare:Las Vegas to Delhi \$1500
- Airfare:Slovenia to Delhi \$1150
- Film \$ 350
- Medical Kit \$ 320
- Food from US \$ 160
- Gamma Globulin shot \$ 40
- Transportation in India \$ 450
- Porters \$ 400
- Food bought in India \$ 375
- Misc: hotels, dining, etc. \$ 475



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Heroes Page



above: Wener Braun in Yosemite (Quiz: who is the hero in the photo Werner is holding? Hint: the picture originally appeared in Yosemite Climber).

Below: Little bits I have written about climbers over the years.

- [Royal Robbins](#)
- [Silvo Karo](#)
- [Fred Beckey](#)
- [Xaver Bongard](#)
- [Paul Pritchard](#)
- [Derek Hersey](#)
- [Bullwinkle fotos of heroes](#)

Walt Shipley

At Walt's memorial in Yosemite Valley, many of the nearly 100 people who attended spoke of Walt's endearing qualities. Everyone knew of him as an intense man, passionate and full of life at all times. I spoke of his loyalty to his friends, and his incredible energy. I talked of our climbs together and how I have rarely felt such a bond with my climbing partners, and of the way despite Walt's wild temperament, you could always count on him to helping out and constantly proving his commitment to his friends, no matter how intense the situation, as it often got on our wild routes.

I first met Walt in Joshua Tree in 1980, he came over to my campsite after hearing I was a fellow Mechanical Engineer, to collaborate on the difficult analysis of the precise speed of a climber's impact to the ground who had fallen 400 feet off the Tangerine Trip. The combination of intellectual contemplation and physical activity that Walt inspired was intoxicating. We would often go on solo climbing binges together, and I have never felt such a bond with anyone while risking life in the pursuit of the higher consciousness that often arises from intense adrenaline experiences. With Walt, somehow I felt comfortable with the risk of death with such a good friend. On our first wall together, the first winter ascent of Zenyatta Mendatta (5th overall), we were both terrified out of our skulls, but together we both made our first break into the realm of the "hard" big walls. We later made first ascents of big wall testpieces on Half Dome in Yosemite and Abraham in Zion, which are still some of my most memorable big wall experiences. As well as a climbing companion, Walt also helped me make big breakthroughs in portaledge frame design, when he came out and visited the Southwest for a few weeks, during which we also climbed some of the coolest desert towers. To share an adventure or life experience with Walt was an unforgettable time.

Walt was a person who helped those around him find faith and reason not only with aspects of climbing, but also the elements of life. He had the natural ability to shift a person's awareness into a deeper level. With Walt's passing, we have lost on this earth the manifestation of a spirit that is so rare. Walt loved living at the edge, and inspired others to do so though his infatigable character. We will miss him dearly, but we'll never forget him. He will continue to inspire.

John Middendorf

In 2009, we lost a great hero:

THE NEW YORK TIMES **OBITUARY**

John Bachar, Rock Climber, Dies at 51; Daredevil With Uncompromising Style

By MICHAEL BRICK

John Bachar, a rock climber who inspired awe as a daredevil, condescension as an anachronism and eventually respect as a legend, fell to his death Sunday from a rock formation near his home in California. He was 51.



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home in California. He was 51.

After years of climbing without protection, sustaining his only major injuries in a car wreck, Bachar was confirmed dead by the sheriff of Mono County, Calif., where he lived in the town of Mammoth Lakes.

"He was an artist," said Dean Fidelman, a contemporary who has climbed with him for decades. "He transcended the sport."

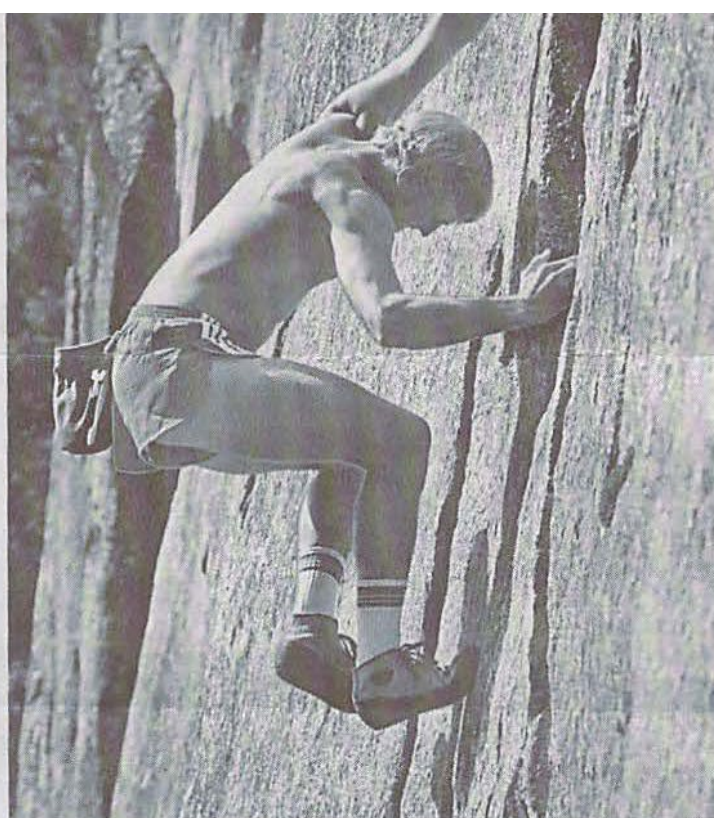
Bachar left his mark across the Yosemite Valley, the worldwide focal point of elite climbing in the 1970s, by making terrifying ascents of spectacular rock formations like El Capitan.

To critics, Bachar cut a stubborn, self-righteous figure, uncompromising on matters of daring style and minimal gear. To admirers, he represented the vanishing purity of a simpler age, a time when rocks and mountains were to be ascended only from the ground up, without advance rigging. For about half a decade at his prime, Bachar enjoyed a reputation comparable only to that of Royal Robbins in the 1950s.

"Since Bachar, I don't think there was anybody you could say was the greatest, most influential climber in the world in his time," said Pete Mortimer, a Yosemite stalwart known among climbers.

In the early 1970s, Bachar arrived in the Yosemite Valley with a pair of boots, an alto saxophone and a stunning physique, joining a group of brash young climbers known as the Stonemasters. The big-wall climbing styles of the 1960s were making way for a style known as free climbing, whose practitioners sought to minimize their gear, using ropes only for protection. Bachar took that kind of self-reliance to levels that could appear dangerous.

"If ever a Stonemaster carried the name on his sleeve (and he scribbled it on his boots as well), it was John Bachar, Grand Templar of the entire movement," wrote John Long, a founder of the group, in an online history. Bachar once spent an entire season climbing without using a rope. He offered \$10,000 to any-



LOS ANGELES TIMES

John Bachar free-climbing in the Yosemite Valley in 1984.

***'He was an artist,'
a contemporary
says. 'He transcended
the sport.'***

one who could keep up with him for a day. He found no takers.

His exploits soon gained notice in the American Alpine Journal, where one diarist wrote that "his extraordinary free-climbing talent, coupled with an awesome physique, polished by the mental discipline of years of experience, place him at a level few attain."

As the sport splintered into ever narrower specializations in the 1980s, Bachar fell from grace among some climbers. Some adapted his unharnessed physical techniques to the safe confines of boulder climbing, while others sought to scale more difficult pitches with bolts and other gear that could sometimes permanently mark the rock formations.

"John never really pushed his ethos on anyone, but because he was so good and made no bones about it, he was often attacked —

simply because he represented something so different than the changing mainstream," said John Middendorf, a climber based in Australia. "He was really quite Zen in this regard."

Bachar's vision of purity found renewed interest in the 1990s, as a new generation of climbers took issue with bolting and other practices they perceived as unnatural, irresponsible or even cheating. He found work designing climbing shoes, establishing himself as a mentor.

In 2006, while driving through Nevada at night, Bachar flipped his car; his business partner, Steve Karafa, died in the wreck.

"He definitely felt, after that, that Steve's death was on him," said Nathan Smith, a friend and climbing photographer. "He was the one driving. I think he felt responsible for it."

Bachar returned to climbing while still recovering from his own injuries in a neck brace.

Around noon Sunday, he fell from a formation called Dike Wall, not far from his home. He is survived by a son, Tyrus. He also leaves climbing routes bearing his name across the Yosemite Valley.

ONLINE: NOTABLE DEATHS

A slide show highlighting the lives of some of those who died this year.

nytimes.com/obituaries

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This is a piece I wrote for Climbing's Players section in 1995 or so

Players-Paul Pritchard

When Paul Pritchard was a young lad, he jumped down a six story stairwell at his school on an impulse, and later awoke in the hospital with no broken bones. The experience was a precursor to how he would nurture his bold instincts on the rocks.

Born in 1967, Paul began climbing at age 16. He soon moved to North Wales, home of the fearsome crag Gogarth, the sea cliff famous for its boltless, bold climbs on chossy quartzite. At the age of 18, he established Super Calabrese on Gogarth, a three pitch British E8, 6b. Paul led each of its three pitches, which would be given the modest grade of 5.12b here in the States, yet the E8 rating hints at the whole story. Little of the gear "protecting" the 30 foot runouts on the route would have held a fall, and one of the belays, a small RP and a knifeblade pounded in a loose flake, would likely have pulled if Paul had fallen anywhere on the dangerous 5.12b second pitch above. Today, 8 years later, Super Calabrese is still considered the most serious route in Britain, and certainly one of the most difficult unprotected climbs of the world.

In the years that followed, Paul interspersed his bold climbs with other types of climbing: sport climbs, mixed routes in the French Alps (as is the British tradition, honing himself in Chamonix), and Scottish ice climbs. Focusing on sport climbing in 1988 and 1989, he red pointed numerous 8a's in Europe, and during a trip to the US, repeated When Legends Die (5.13b), and flashed Torts of Horsham (5.12d) at Heuco Tanks.

Like all full-time British climbers, Paul got by working a few months a year washing windows, and other times collecting the ever-present and munificent British dole. In 1990, Paul planned to join the British 1990 Bhargirathi III Expedition, and procured a grant for expenses, courtesy the government (BMC and Foundation for Sport and Art) and the British Mt. Everest Foundation. In Britain, over \$120,000 a year is given to expeditions, and in Paul's own words, "getting grants is as simple as filing out a paper and sending it in".

The expedition returned from India with no success, but Paul came back with a new focus for his climbing: big rock routes in alpine settings.

In December 1991, Paul joined up with Noel Crane, Sean Smithe and Simon Yates and established a new route on the 1200 meter East Face of Central Tower in the Torre de Paine, Patagonia. At grade VI, 5.10, A4, the route's name, EL REGALO DE MWOMA, translates from the Patagonian native Tehuelche Indian language, "A Gift from God". The route generated some controversy, because a Spanish team had left gear and fixed ropes on the first 300 meters for three years, and had more or less "claimed" the route, even, as the story goes, forging a documentary film for Spanish television during which they faked the summit scene on a nearby walk-up snow tower. On climbing the first 300 meters to the Spanish team's high point, Paul and his team found evidence of a mass siege ascent, including backpacks full of rotting wet head lamp batteries, and tons of rope and gear slung about. The rangers of the Torre de Paine park have frowned upon this type of activity, so as a public service, Paul and his crew merrily jettisoned the barrels of gear down the route (to eventually make their way to a more discreet location). For about a month they then worked on the route, fixing ropes in between spells of bad weather, and eventually had 900 meter of rope fixed, poised for the final 300 meter

sprint to the summit. Bad weather set in, and they returned to Campamento Torres, a small climber housing development project in the wilds of Patagonia, and chilled out in the bad weather.

The team then went to the disco in the nearby Puerto Natales, drank numerous bottles of Pisco, the vile Patagonian equivalent of absinthe, and repsyched for the route.

The team feared the worst: that the weather would be crap for weeks, as it usually is in Patagonia, and wouldn't clear until after their food and money ran out. Besides, fixed ropes only last about a week in Patagonia storms before they become completely shredded by the high winds. About this time, the Spanish team arrived to finish their claim. When they found out what happened to their gear, a multi-day fight ensued, broken only by spells of the Spanish team's attempts to get poised for the route. The weather cleared, and in a 27 hour push, Paul and Noel made it to the summit, and back to the top of their fixed ropes. The next day, they pulled all their ropes and gear off the mountain, and headed out of camp victoriously past the still shell-shocked and angry Spanish team.

In the months following the expedition, Paul sold all his gear in succession to fund more climbing in South America. With Phillip Lloyd, the pair established two 15 pitch 5.12a in the Torre de Paine park, both climbed on sight in 24 hour pushes. The two routes, El Caballo de Diablo (The Horse of the Devil) on the North Tower, and Planet Earth to Pisco Control on Paine Chico, are true testaments to the future of difficult alpine wall routes in the mountains. In March, Paul then sold much of his gear and climbed for a month at the paradise crag of Baralliche (sp?) in Argentina, on sighting many 5.12a's. He continued north to Brazil, stopping to climb a 20 pitch 5.12a wall route in the Brazilian jungle, complete with 25 meter runouts on difficult rock. There he sold the last of his rock gear and continued to Bolivia to solo several 6000 meter peaks. Three times on his 8 month journey since leaving Britain he was down to \$10, and finding a buyer for his gear in the nick of time. In Bolivia, he sold the last of his gear (ice-axe, crampons, sleeping bag, and clothes) to scrape together the \$600 airfare for a flight to Ireland.

Paul worked on his solvency for a few months, washing windows and building climbing walls, climbed every day, and planned a series of expeditions. In January 1993, Paul returned to Patagonia, and after an unsuccessful attempt on Cerro Torre, teamed up with Celia Bull and climbed another new route on the North Tower, along with several other shorter new routes in the area. Within five days of returning from Patagonia, he established two new E6, 6b's (5.12R) at Gogarth. Then one rainy day, he and Glenn Robbins rappelled to the base of Gogarth for an ascent of Games Climbers Play, the unseconded difficult and dangerous route put up by the legendary Pat Littlejohn in 1979, and to this day hasn't seen a second ascent. 100 feet up the first pitch, Paul fell while attempting a sea-slimed mantle shelf move. He ripped the entire pitch, fell onto an ocean boulder shattering his ankle, then fell backwards another 15 feet head first down a hole in the boulders, in which he ripped both shoulders, fractured his skull, and became wedged upside down underwater. It took Glenn several minutes to untie and dislodge Paul who was now drowning in the raging ocean currents. Paul recalls going in and out of consciousness as he caught glimpses of Glenn either resuscitating him or fruitlessly trying to find a way to solo out. Amazingly, a hiker out in the rain happened to look over the edge of Gogarth and catch Glenn's frantic cries for help and a helicopter was soon procured.

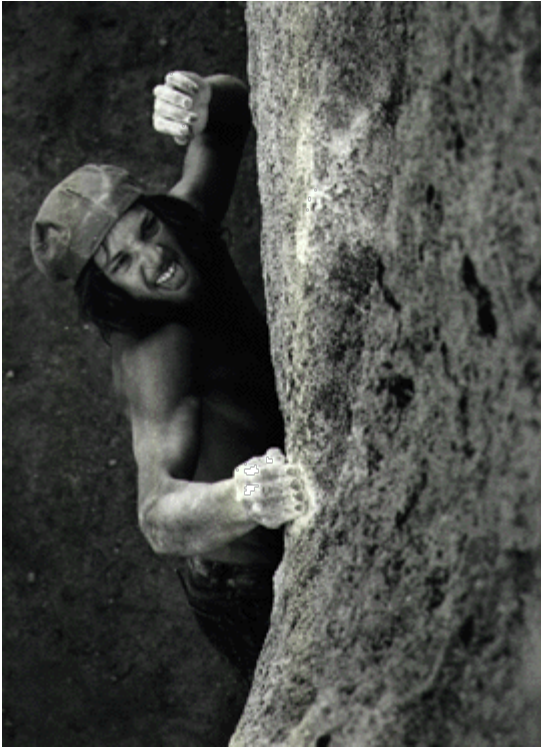
Whether or not the accident has tempered Paul's boldness remains to be seen. Despite the doctor's assurance that he couldn't climb for 18 months, 4 months later Paul was climbing 5.12b sport routes with wrecked shoulders, and in August, 1993 returned to India with Johnny Dawes and Phillip Lloyd, to attempt the fearsome East Face of the middle summit of Meru, one of Mug Stump's dream climbs. After 8 days of climbing 31 pitches of 5.12a rock and difficult mixed climbing capsule style, with only 10 more pitches to easy ground, Johnny dropped one of his plastic boots, necessitating retreat for the team. Their high point of 6300 meters compounded Paul's still waterlogged lungs from his

near drowning, and a grim lung infection ensued. Not one to be put off by a few bodily handicaps, Paul and Phillip then attempted Shivling, and later traveled to Southern India to climb on granite domes.

At 26, Paul shows no sign of slackening his climbs in the mountains. In May of this year, paul and Steve Quinlan are off the Baffin Island to attempt a new route on Mt. Asgard. Paul's laid back attitude and talent for extreme rock is the perfect combination for the rigors of expedition climbing.

By John Middendorf

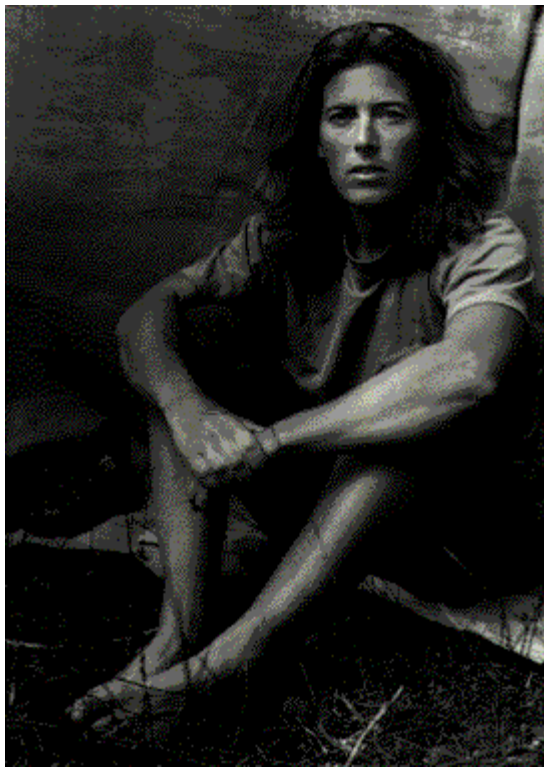
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The Yabo



TM Herbert



Lynn Hill

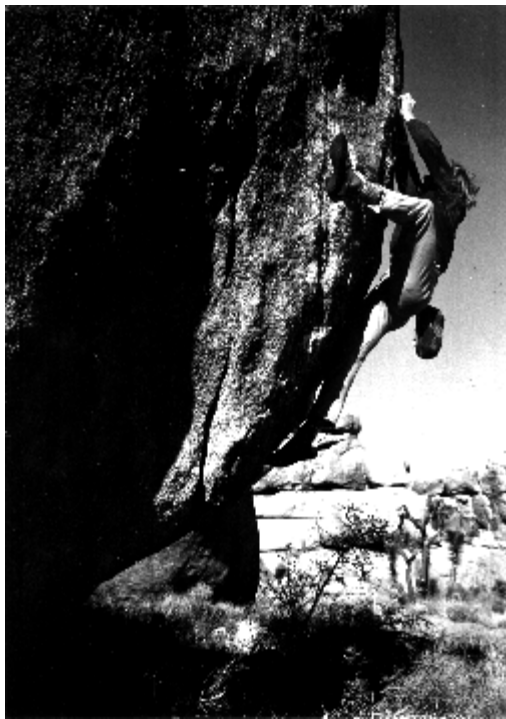


Photo: John Bachar in Joshua Tree

Photos by Dean Fidelman

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Photography by Dean Fidelman

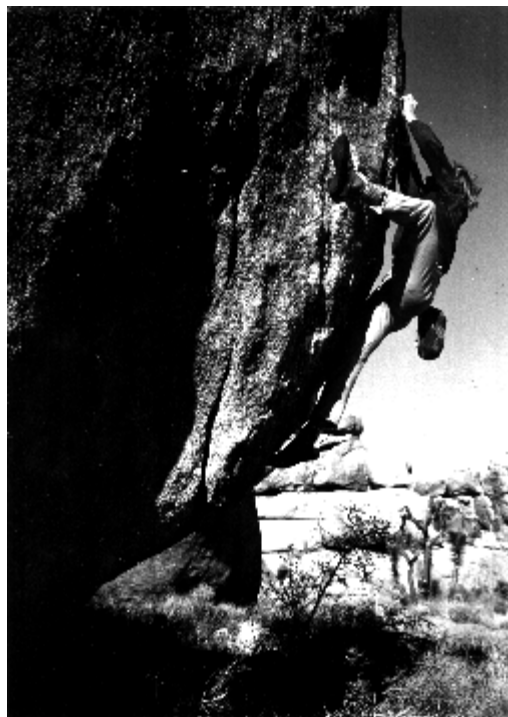


Photo: John Bachar in Joshua Tree

Dean Fidelman 213-217-1562

[More of Dean's art in the Heroes Section](#)

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This is a letter I wrote shortly after Derek's demise on the Steck Salathe

A Letter on Derek Hersey

Derek was a great friend of mine. Recently, as Derek, Brad White, and myself drank bottles of Scheafs at a Zion picnic table, he named me "Chief Punter, USA". Coming from Derek, who noted himself as the chief punter of the planet, it was a fine honor indeed.

Years before, I met Derek in Yosemite, when he was still living in Manchester. He told me that if ever in England, to visit his home town crags based out of Stony Middleton. A year later, in 1981, I took his information to heart, and found myself hitchhiking from London to a spot difficult to find on even the larger scale maps. Arriving at the small village and seeing nothing but a pub, a cafe, and a few quiet homes, I was sure that I was on a wild goose chase. Eventually, I did discover the crags, later ran into and climbed with Derek, and had a fine climbing holiday.

A few years later, Derek and I climbed the Nose on El Capitan. We were Team Stink. I had just spent 7 days on Iron Hawk, and with no shower inbetween, went up on the Nose with Derek. Derek at the time had strong bonds with living in the dirt at its finest, and hadn't bathed for weeks. "Dirty Derek" was his apt nickname. We had a skimpy rack, and had forgotten to bring any extra carabiners, and we had a great time finagling gear yet ascending steadily and stinkily upwards.

The last conversation I had with Derek was wise words of wisdom which did much to solve unanswered questions. My climbing partner Brad Quinn and I, both bachelors at the time, had coined our mantra for the spring Zion climbing season, "climbs before gals". When we asked Derek what he thought of our mantra, he replied after a few thoughtful strokes of his tuft of beard on his chin, "Well, I'll say this: climbing can kill you, but women can destroy you. There's a big difference, y'know," in his unique British ascent.

We'll miss you, Derek.

--John Middendorf

Below: Derek in the Rock House tree house, Springdale.

Author's note: I lived in this tree house, now demolished, for a whole summer while climbing in Zion.



Below: Derek on the entry boulder, Zion NP.



[RETURN TO Bigwalls.net](http://Bigwalls.net)

Fred Beckey

This is a piece I wrote for Climbing's "Hot Flashes" about a trip I made with Freddie in 1995. I was quite impressed with Fred: still as sharp as a tack when it comes to logistics of an expedition, and incredibly fit. The first day we hiked over 8 miles on up and down terrain with pretty heavy packs (with only a little complaining). Of course, all his gear is archaic: frame packs, leather boots, and neoprene strap crampons.

Mt. Beckey in the Alaska Range climbed.

Calvin Hebert, John Middendorf, and Fred Beckey explored a relatively unknown area of the Alaska Range and climbed the highest peak in the area: Mt Beckey (formerly peak 8500'). We climbed the peak, which is located at coordinates North 62 degrees, 52 minutes, West 152 degrees, 15 minutes, from the west. In June, we flew into a small gravel strip at the base of Camp Creek where we met the proprietor of the Grandview Lodge, a remote hunting and fishing lodge which is accessible only by plane on the west side of the Alaskan Range. From there, we fought mosquitoes on our trek up and over a 5200' pass to the Cathedral Glacier, where we set up basecamp at approximately 4500 feet. Fred's endurance of carrying heavy loads in his ancient framepack amazed me. Surrounding our basecamp, many beautiful unclimbed 1000 foot rock walls rose up, and although we had plenty of technical rock climbing gear delivered by airdrop, we opted instead to climb the mountaineering challenge of Peak 8500, mostly because of the unsettled weather. While waiting for several days for the weather to clear and shuttling heavy loads of the technical gear back to the Camp Creek area, Calvin and I joked, "It's a backpacking and sleeping adventure! with your host, Fred Beckey!"--a la the 'Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous' commentator. We climbed Peak 8500 on June 28th in whiteout, windless conditions. Just prior to roping up on the upper Cathedral glacier, Fred fell into a deep crevasse to his neck, and was heroically rescued by Calvin, who leaped over the crevasse in a flash and pulled Fred out. The crux of the route was a loose rock step, which Fred led (5.5X). It was nice to climb with Fred, with all his experiences in the mountains, and with whom every logistical aspect of climbing and living in the mountains was at all times thought out in detail. From the rock step a beautiful snow ridge led to the summit. The three of us had been alternating leads during the climb, and although Fred had been leading on the section just below the top, he stopped 20 feet short of the summit and allowed me to pass, in honor of it being my first Alaskan summit, whereupon I named the peak Mt. Beckey.

Fred Beckey has been climbing since the mid 1930's, and ever since his participation in the first ascent of Forbidden Peak in 1940, Fred has climbed countless first ascents all over the world. In America, Fred must be one of most prolific climbers in history, with probably over 1000 first ascents in North America alone. He was born in 1921 and climbs well to this day.

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These are some quick notes for Silvo Karo that I was asked to write for someone writing an article on these talented Slovenians.

Silvo Karo

Born 1960

1977: Started climbing

1977-1982: climbing in Europe--alpine, rock routes. 40 new routes. Studied as Electricity Mechanic. Climbs with Franc Knez, one of Slovenia's pioneers, and Janez Jeglic.

1982 First trip to US (with Janez Jeglic) on an exchange trip sponsored by Steve Komito; Devil's Tower, Colorado (Long's Peak, new route on the Spearhead) Wyoming: 5.12's.

1983: Patagonia with Franc Knez and Janez Jeglic. Climbed the Devil's Dihedral on Fitzroy in two months. Fixed 600 meters of rope. Incredible route.

1984: Lots of Dolomite. Many new difficult routes established.

1985, Feb/March: Expedition to Xalungkang (8505meters), a sub summit of Kanchenjunga. Expedition style with Tomo Cesen, Janez, Franc, others. At 8100 meters there was a case of Cerebral Edema and they descended.

1985 summer: routes in alps: 2nd ascent of Rolling Stone on Grand Jorasse.

1985 November: East Face of Cerro Torre. 6 climbers led by Stane Klemenc. Fixed initial then spent 2 days on route. Another incredible route.

1986: Broad Peak with Mateve Lenarcic. No oxygen. Austrian route.

1986: Torre Egger: Psycho Vertical 900 meters. new route. 500 meters of rope fixed.

1987 Lhotse Shar attempt. pre monsoon.

1987 South Face Cerro Torre. 1400 meter route. 24 trips to the base. A film was made of this climb which wins 1st prize at Trento. A milestone for Patagonian climbing.

1989 Gahrwal. No Permit climbs with Franc. Climbs (?) Bhagirathi III with a team of 4.

1989 Yosemite. Climbs with Bridwell.

1990: Gahrwal. Sponsors ok now. Climbs the West Face of B.3 with Janez in super alpine style. 1300 meter portaledge route.

1991-2: climbing in Slovenia. Marries Alma. Climbing 8a french.

1992 Married his wife, Alma.

1993. Climbs Wyoming Sheep Ranch with Marko Prezeli.

Below is an entry I wrote when I was doing some very basic editing for Greg Child's Encyclopedia. Many big heroes were left out of this book; unfortunately I did not have time (nor was I hired) to write entries for his work. But I couldn't let Royal be left out.

ROBBINS, ROYAL

Royal Robbins is without question one of the most influential American climbers of the latter 20th century. Born in 1935 in West Virginia, he moved out to Los Angeles at age 5, and as a teenager in the boy scouts, Royal was introduced to the mountains on a two week camping trip in the High Sierra in YOSEMITE National Park, which began a lifelong commitment to the craft of mountaineering in particular, and outdoor adventure in general.

After cutting his teeth on the sandstone crops of San Fernando Valley in California, Royal spent his early years developing his skills at TAHQUITZ. He became one of the leading climbers in the area and made the FIRST FREE ASCENT of Open Book (5.9) which was identified at that time as the hardest free climb in the country. In 1957, he and Jerry Gallwas and Mike Sherrick made the first ascent in five days of the northwest face of HALF DOME, the first Grade VI in the country.

After a stint in the army, Robbins made the decision to devote himself to a life of outdoor adventure. From 1960 to 1964 he worked at Sugar Bowl in California as a ski instructor in the winter, and spent the rest of the year traveling and climbing. During this period, he made the second ascent in 7 days of the Nose route on EL CAPITAN (the first ascent by Warren HARDING took 45 days spread over a year and a half). He also climbed two new BIG WALL routes on El Capitan, the SALATHE WALL and the North American Wall, the latter considered the hardest big wall route in the world at the time. In 1964, Robbins climbed the first ascent of the southeast face of Proboscis, in the CIRQUE OF THE UNCLIMBABLES, the first time a major Yosemite-type big wall had been done in a remote setting.

In 1963 Robbins married Elizabeth Burkner (Liz), and in 1965 they moved to Leysin, Switzerland where Robbins established many difficult routes in Europe, including the now CLASSIC American Direct on the DRU, at the time considered the hardest rock climb in the western ALPS.

They returned to the US in 1967 where Royal and Liz set up a successful rock CLIMBING SCHOOL called Rockcraft located in Modesto, California, famous for its high level of instruction. In 1969, Robbins climbed Tis-sa-sack on Half Dome. In all Robbins climbed 5 new routes on Half Dome. He also made a solo ascent of the Muir route on El Capitan (named after John MUIR). This was the second ascent and the first ROPE SOLO of the great rock monolith, El Capitan. Robbins regards this as his most challenging climb.

In 1969, Robbins and Liz started the first of many successful business enterprises: Mountain Paraphernalia, which wholesaled and retailed imported climbing gear, many items of which helped to outfit the next generation of big wall climbers. In 1971 Royal wrote "Basic Rockcraft" and in 1973, "Advanced Rockcraft", two books which inspired a

generation of climbers to climb using CLEAN PROTECTION. In 1979 Royal founded "Royal Robbins", a manufacturer which offered a complete line of color coordinated outdoor clothing and by 1988 had \$10 million in sales. 10% of net profits are committed to projects saving the Earth, and have become a model company in organizational recycling.

Royal learned to kayak in 1975 and has since kayaked down some of the most challenging rivers of the world, including many "first descents" (a term used by river runners to indicate the first time a particular section a river has been run) in California and Chile.

His biography, Royal Robbins-Spirit of the Age, by climbing author Pat Ament, was published in October 1992.

by John Middendorf

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Paintings by Bill Middendorf



Sunset in Little Compton



On the Beach



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Frances



Frances Middendorf Reed/212-473-3586

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Roxy Paine Sculptures



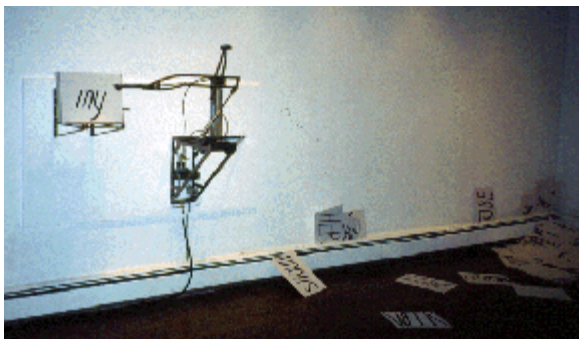
"Kick Butt" by Roxy Paine 1992 (at the Herron Test Site)

This piece is activated every few minutes. The boot rises slowly, then releases on its pendulum arm, swinging back and kicking the rubber bust of the artist's lower torso which then reverberates on its springy stand.



"Plug-in Painting" by Roxy Paine 1995 (at the R. Feldman Gallery, Soho)

A large 'canvas' with randomly placed inserts which accept the intricately molded larger-than-life brushstrokes.



"The Flinger" by Roxy Paine 1995 (at the R. Feldman Gallery, Soho)

The Flinger sits dormant most of the time. On periodic intervals, the masterfully welded machine lowers its arm, grabs a card, and flings it across the room, exposing the next card. The sequence of cards record conversations of the artist and was restocked daily during the month-long showing of the piece.

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Minimum Impact in the Mountains: Garbology 101

by John Middendorf

You have brains in your head,

you have feet in your shoes,

you can steer yourself any direction you choose.

--Dr. Seuss



Photo: Abandoned basecamp in India

Introduction to mountain waste management issues.

As we progress into the 21st century, the presence of humankind extends into ever more distant boundaries. One of the characteristic impacts of the exploration of remote areas is piles of left-behind trash. It is nothing new: since the dawn of man and woman, items of no worth to the owner have been tossed by the wayside, much to archeologists and historians delight. But the artifacts of yesterday were of mostly organic origin and generally of no harm to the environment. Many indigenous cultures today, who are new to the concept of extensive packaging of consumable products, continue to

throw useless items aside wherever they may be. The more recently the society is exposed to disposable packaging, the more the disposable items are strewn about. But the artifacts we leave behind today consists largely of inorganic items. Much of it is objectionable for aesthetic reasons, but much of it, like batteries and certain plastics, are objectionable for survival reasons.

One of the places where humans should be most careful is in the mountain ranges, which not only are the last remaining pristine places, but also where much of the world's drinking water comes from. Mountaineers, climbers, and trekkers turn out to be the worst offenders of mountain garbage, since these groups spend the most time in the remote mountains. As a community, we need to take a stand on this issue.

Garbage come in many forms, but the main categories are glass, metal, paper, plastic, and toxic items like batteries. Throughout the Himalaya and the mountain ranges of the world, one can find caches of such items left by international expeditions. One wonders whether or not these expeditions were leaving their version of a time capsule, or in some cases, trying to create something resembling a totem of possibly some arcane religion. In all cases, the garbage left by climbing expeditions in the mountains is a disgrace, especially when one learns how simple it is to have manageable garbage loads at the end of a trip.

Garbage can be further refined into specific categories: burnable items, semi-burnable, non-burnable, biodegradables, and toxic items. Semi-burnables are items like paper packaging with a foil liner, which can be burned and the remaining foil can be removed after the fire cools. Biodegradables include most food scraps and human waste, which can be disposed of in certain ways (human waste buried, and biodegradables scattered in a discreet area) as to have no lasting impact on the area.

As an example of how trash breaks down, on a recent six-week trip to India, we trekked into base camp with 250 pounds of consumables, of which I would estimate 60 pounds was packaging. Of that, 35 pounds was burnable. At the end of our trip, we ended up with only a 25 pound load of non-burnable items and batteries to carry out. We left nothing behind, and left our basecamps in better shape than when we arrived (we cleaned up some of the trash left by previous expeditions as well).

The first thing to plan for leaving a clean base camp in the mountains is during the purchasing of provisions for the trip. Buying products with minimal packaging is essential, and only a few glass items should be considered. High quality zip lock bags which can be used and reused many times are key in organizing food and reducing the stock packaging. These, incidentally, are not available in most third world countries, so bringing some from the homeland is required. Food should be repackaged in as little packaging as possible, which not only makes the clean up simpler, but also reduces the weight of the gear to carry into basecamp.

For cooking, consider using liquid fuel in all cases: piles of empty butane/propane canisters can also be found at every base camp in the world's mountain ranges. Compressed fuel canisters should only be considered for times when a gas stove is not practical. Kerosene stoves are common in Asia. Alternatively, bring a propane stove with a large refillable tank for base camp. Large propane tanks can be purchased and sold at the end of a trip in many area in South America. Be aware that the fittings must be converted to metric --metric fittings can be crimped to the stock pressure hose on a US Coleman stove with adapters and tools commonly available in hardware stores of many countries.

Glen Rink, Grand Canyon River Guide and master of garbology is under the firm belief that garbage maintenance can be fun. All it requires is the ability to wash your hands afterward and a little pyromania in the blood. The main key is keeping impact to a minimum in the mountains is really not how much tundra that is trampled, rather, it is the maintenance of the waste produced.

During a river trip down the Grand Canyon, I found it fascinating to watch the master himself at work. Glen, know to his friends as LB ("Little Buddy"), would take great care at the end of the day to unravel the soaked canvas garbage sack, sort out each and every piece of garbage according to type, allow the paper to dry, and proceed to reduce a giant mound of trash into a packet that you could fit in your pocket. He did this by building a small fire and burning each piece in a controlled manner. Simple, obvious, and effective. Why didn't we think of that? Instead, I must admit, I've been a unenlightened accomplice of the typical method of piling in one spot all the garbage from weeks of living in the mountains, pouring some gasoline over it, and tossing a match, hoping the mass of half burnable, half inert pile will

combust properly. It generally won't, and will leave a disgusting blob of melted plastic, glass and metal coated by a charred black muck. Such artifacts can also be found in virtually every mountain ranges of the world. These are unappealing items to find stuck on a boulder in the middle of your chosen campsite.

The idea behind successful garbage reduction is to burn what will burn, and carry out everything that will not biodegrade immediately (like human waste and certain food scrapings). Things which must be carried out include glass, metal, and especially batteries. I was aghast (and found myself wondering about the fate of humankind) when I visited a recently abandoned camp in the Indian Gahrwal last summer when I not only found garbage everywhere but spent lead-acid and alkaline batteries thrown in the river which was the water supply for several expeditions downstream. As far as burying used batteries: now get real. If someone was playing in your backyard, would you appreciate them planting toxic batteries next to your garden? I've also seen charred batteries in a remnant base camp fires which makes me think how these folks were trying to accelerate the toxic feeding of the soil by burning off the shell. Lead doesn't burn. In fact, it is the only element that cannot be changed into anything but its liquid or gaseous form. It does, however, bond to other molecules to create toxic substances. The point here is that spent batteries must be carried out; anything else is inexcusable.

After sorting out the garbage, food scraps and biodegradables, glass and batteries, and burnable items should be separated into individual piles. Now the fun begins: the fire. The main key to successful garbage fire is: BIGGER IS NOT BETTER. Attempting to pile a huge mix of garbage usually results in a huge charred conglomerate with most of the bulk and weight intact. The small Navajo fire is superior to the so-called white-man fire, with burnable items added a little at a time. A fire about two foot square is about right. The other thing to keep in mind is frequent maintenance: a garbage burns at least every few days is necessary too keep the final job reasonable. Each garbage burn will require a few hours of time.

The big question here becomes, "What about plastic? Most plastic creates toxic fumes when burned." This may be true, and for that reason it becomes a personal choice whether to burn plastic or not. In the Himalaya, where all the garbage is likely to be eventually thrown into the river at the roadhead anyway, it seems like the best policy is to burn. But the main argument for burning plastic despite its atmospheric detriments, is to reduce the size of the garbage. On most trips, a big part of the bulk is plastic. Besides being a more manageable and easier load to carry, reduced garbage without plastic is more likely to be disposed of properly once a town is reached. Of course, stay upwind of fires burning plastic.

After each burn, sort out the tin-foil and the items that didn't burn properly leaving nothing but ashes. It takes some skill in making sure that all the plastic burned properly; otherwise, melted blobs of plastic will remain. Everything except for the ashes should be sorted out and put aside for transport out of basecamp.

The generally accepted practice today is to burn a massive pile of garbage all at once, with hopes that it will reduce significantly, and the remnant mess buried or thrown into a crevasse. Both burying trash and throwing trash in the crevasses are unacceptable and unnecessary practices. Conglomerates of buried trash are frequently dug up by birds and mountain animals, who will then strew the garbage around looking for the food scraps. Throwing garbage into a glacier is equally disgusting. Keep the mountains pure. Every bit adds up to the contamination of the wilds. The point is to keep it out of the mountains. The techniques outlined above will keep the mountains pristine for many generations to come.

As the Indian LO Harish C. Thakus said, as we sadly looked upon a trashed abandoned base camp in Topoban, "These are not the signs of a good mountaineer".

Garbology 101

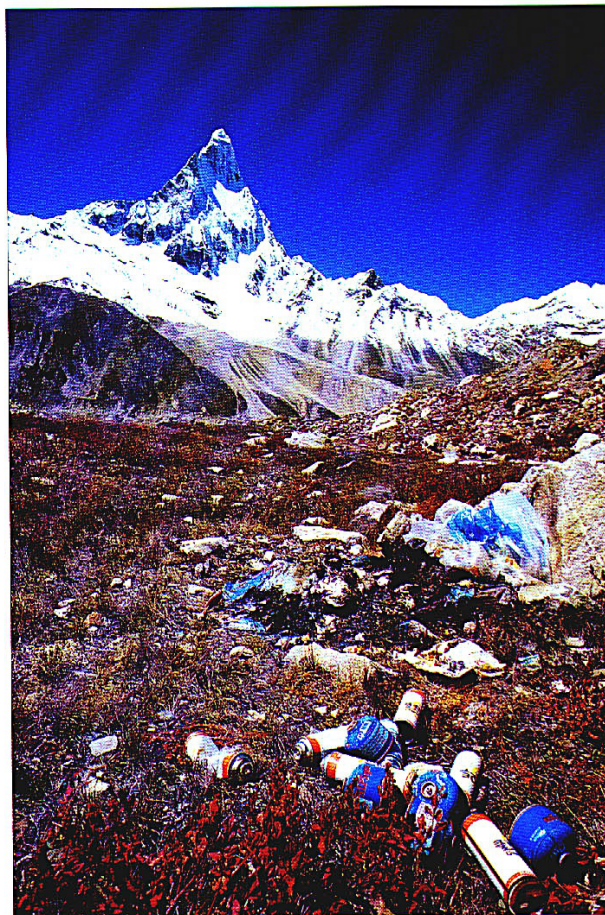
Time to clean up our act

Spiraling into the 21st century, we invade ever more distant mountains in the name of exploration. Also in the name of exploration, we leave behind heaps of abandoned equipment, garbage, and waste. While our trash may someday be fodder for archeologists on a dig, it speaks poorly of us as climbers. In short, it is a disgrace. Rare is the climber's basecamp that isn't littered with spent fuel canisters, tin cans, and chunks of unidentifiable charred matter, the product of a half-hearted attempt at garbage incineration. I was aghast when I visited a recently abandoned camp in the Indian Gahrwal last summer. There I found not only trash everywhere, but batteries thrown in the river, the water supply for several expeditions downstream.

How are we going to clean up our act? First, we have to recognize the problem. Second, we must take steps to minimize trash. And finally, we need to educate ourselves on ways to properly dispose of waste.

This may sound inane, but simply being aware that it is wrong to leave garbage behind is a big step for most of us. Don't think that just because a campsite is already littered with debris, feces, and firepits, that it is OK to dump your trash there. Also don't think that because your site is remote or the crevasse that you want to pitch your garbage in is deep no one will ever see it. Even in the most off-beat places, trash breeds more trash, and crevasse garbage eventually finds its way into someone's water supply. Set the example. Consider the logistics of dealing with your trash as important as the logistics that get you up the mountain.

Besides being environmentally and morally correct, proper garbage disposal can save you work in the long run. On a recent six-week trip to India, our team trekked into basecamp with 250 pounds of consumables — the source of most climber's garbage — of which approxi-



Abandoned trash, Shivering.

Photo: John Middendorf

mately 60 pounds were packaging. Of that, 35 pounds were burnable. At the end of our trip, we ended up with only a 25-pound load of non-burnables and batteries to carry out. We left nothing behind.

The best way to deal with trash is not to generate any, or generate as little as

possible. Do this by thinking ahead when you purchase provisions. Buy products with minimal packaging, and when that's not possible, repackage the supplies so the container can either be burned or easily carried out at trip's end. Repackage food stuffs that come in glass containers,

POOP TUBES, c. 1995--John Middendorf published the first article in Climbing Magazine on the importance of packing poop up the walls around 1995 with the illustration above describing how to make a poop tube.

In the 1980's climbers pooped in a paper bag which was then tossed, with the idea to return to the base and pick it up, but often that did not happen. As climbers on El Capitan increased, it was clear that a new solution was required. Building a PVC tube that was streamlined for hauling but could contain the toxic sludge for later disposal provided a solution. First poop in a paper bag, then put into the plastic bag lined PVC tube.



PVC Poop Tube 4" diameter
Use with paper bags and plastic
liner for tube. Dispose in RV dump.

But Seriously....



[RETURN TO Bigwalls.net](http://Bigwalls.net)

Basic Big Wall Gear

by John Middendorf

Big-wall climbs are, among other things, technological achievements. The management of more items than contained in a small mountain shop can be a considerable task in itself. The actual climbing is, by comparison, simple. The trick is to keep things under control with an organized gear management system.

Big walls are gear intensive, but its possible to get started on the big stones with a moderate amount of additional gear aquisition, dependent on the amount of improvization and borrowing that is done. The following is a basic checklist of the gear required.

Main Equipment

- Single or Double Portaledge ([for images see A5 Catalog](#))
- Haulbags
- Ropes (2-3)
- Hauling Pulley
- Stuff Sacks for food and gear organization
- Water Bottles (2 liter soda bottles)
- First Aid Kit (cloth tape, Neosporin, aspirin, etc.)
- Repair Kit (Duct tape, Speedy Stitcher, etc.)
- Food

Rack

- 2-3 Sets of camming devices
- 2-3 sets of wired stoppers
- 2-3 sets of small brass-nuts
- 80 carabiners
- Hook selection (2 to 5 of the standard types)
- Copperhead selection (10-25)
- Pitons (5-10 knifeblades, 10-20 horizontals, 15-25 angles)
- 3 to 5 Birdbeaks
- Tie-offs and runners
- Bolt Kit (optional)

Personal Wall Gear (per climber)

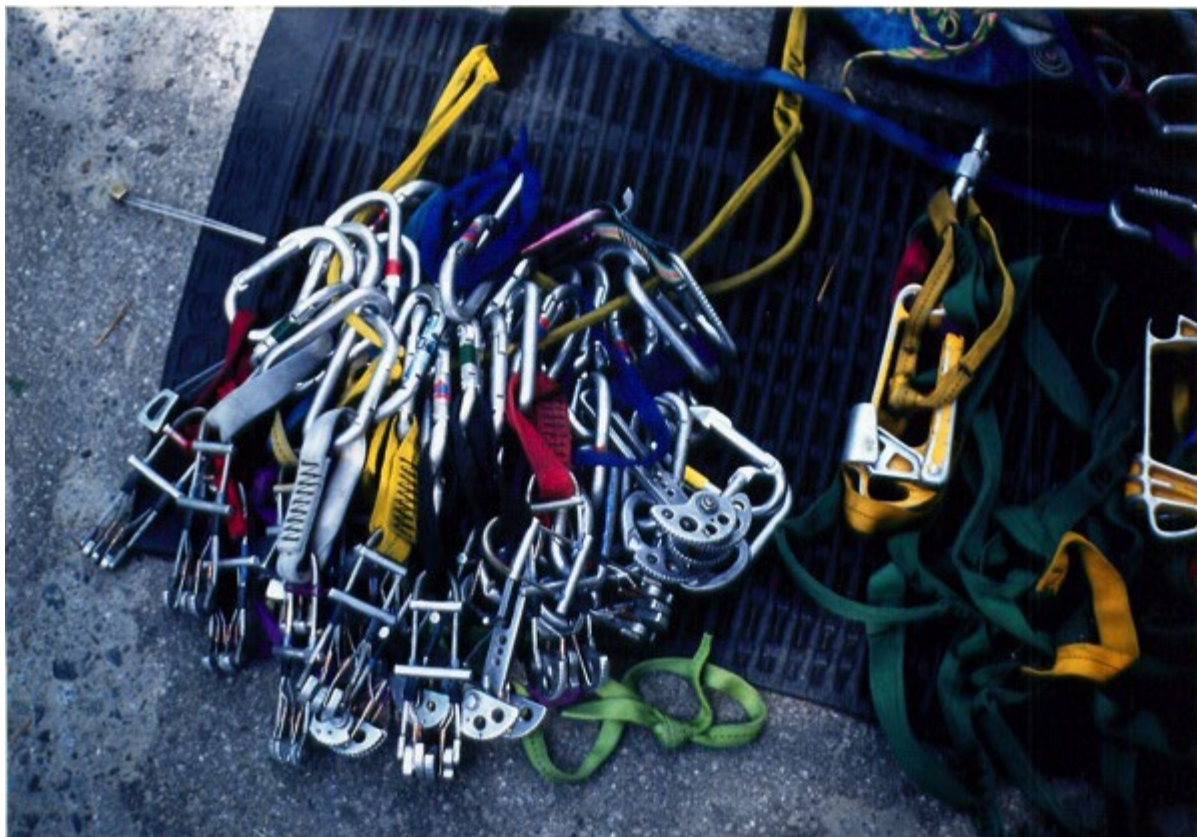
- Harness
- Aiders
- Jumars
- Hammer & holster
- Headlamp
- Rain gear
- Wall-boots
- Kneepads and fingerless gloves
- Wall spoon and Swiss army knife
- Sleeping bag and ensolite

Pre-big-wall tips

Buy food (canned pasta and bagels are good staples) outside of the Valley for the best deals. Sew clip-in loops on all the stuff sacks and sleeping bags. Add tie-off loops to everything, including the water bottles. Maybe saw off some 3/4" (and larger) angles for some shorty pitons. Get psyched, and remember that the first day or two of the wall are the hardest.



Above: Big Wall Rack



Above: Nose-In-A-Day Rack, 1984



Go for it .

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Grade VII

When John Long asked me to include a chapter on the concept of Grade VII for our book, “Climbing Big Walls” back in 1994, I hesitated to define a new standard that was beginning to develop, as my experience was with only one of the most serious big walls on earth. It was clear that when in 1992 when Xaver and I had climbed The Grand Voyage on the Great Trango Tower (a route with 6500 foot of total climbing, including a 4400’ vertical wall, at altitude in a remote area), we had done something which we respected too much to give it the standard highest big wall grade at the time (Grade VI). At the time, there were a few precedents in big wall climbing in terms of total commitment yet none were of Great Trango’s size, altitude, and remoteness. So naturally, for me, Great Trango Tower defines the experience of Grade VII.

Since then, paralleling the advent of the modern stormproof portaledge, many Grade VII’s have been climbed. Yet attempts to define the Grade in print remain elusive. Werner Braun defines it spiritually when he writes, “grade VII would be a route that transcends the vision and limitations of the ordinary”. Chris MacNamara further defines it: “Grade VII refers to extreme alpine big walls that require at least 10 days of suffering on a huge wall in poor weather in a remote area,” outlining all the elements (time, size, effort, conditions, and location) while keeping the definition quite subjective (smart man).

Defining each element individually is problematic; for example, the number of days spent on a major big wall is only relative to the team’s experience and ability: Xaver’s and my pace on the Great Trango Tower over our 15 days was equivalent in terms of effort and efficiency as an ability required to maintain a 3-day pace on the Pacific Ocean wall (so in terms of effort alone, it felt like climbing the PO five times back to back), yet some teams require 10 days on the PO. The fact that some teams have 35 days on a first ascent does not necessarily indicate a greater difficulty or commitment; in fact, less so since a lot of those days are spent hauling the provisions needed for the extended time. A faster ascent, in fact, generally shows more skill and commitment (including the taking of less provisions) than a slower ascent, so counting the days doesn’t define the grade.

The next concept regards the size of the wall. Again, it is difficult to define in terms of pure size, as I would readily grade Charlie’s Porter solo ascent of Asgard in 1974 a Grade VII in terms of sheer boldness and commitment, and Asgard is not as tall as some of longer routes on El Capitan, which are all Grade VI. Weather and remoteness? Without a doubt, these are essential qualities of Grade VII. But many routes in remote and stormy Patagonia were climbed with extensive fixed ropes, and with the safety and comfort provided by ropes leading directly to the ground (so base camp can be reached in any particular day that the weather turns foul or the avalanches get too close), such tactics (generally referred as a siege) drastically reduces the level of commitment.

So that leaves us with the nebulous concepts of style. In terms of style, I would reserve the Grade VII for routes which were first climbed Yosemite alpine style (e.g. no ropes fixed to the ground after the initial pitches), like we did on the Grand Voyage, where the level of commitment is extreme. Other factors are really in the eye of the beholder; as an additional overall grade given to sometimes a long string of ratings given to a modern remote wall (e.g. VII, 5.9+, A4 WI4+), the Grade VII rating belongs to the first ascensionists alone.

Representative Grade VII’s that stand out for me are The East Face of Escudo (first major big wall climbed in Patagonia alpine style without fixed ropes), the Book of Shadows on the north face on Trango, the Slovenian route on Bhagaratti III, and the newer wall routes on the South and East Faces of Cerro Torre. Of course there are many more, there has been an explosion of Grade VII’s from the mid-90’s to today. And there are a handful of routes done prior to the 90’s which must also be Grade VII’s (even though the grade didn’t exist back then), such as the already mentioned solo of Asgard, the American route on Thor, the original British route on Trango Tower, and of course the futuristic 1984 Norwegian Pillar on Great Trango, which unfortunately the first ascensionists never made it back to the ground to offer a rating.

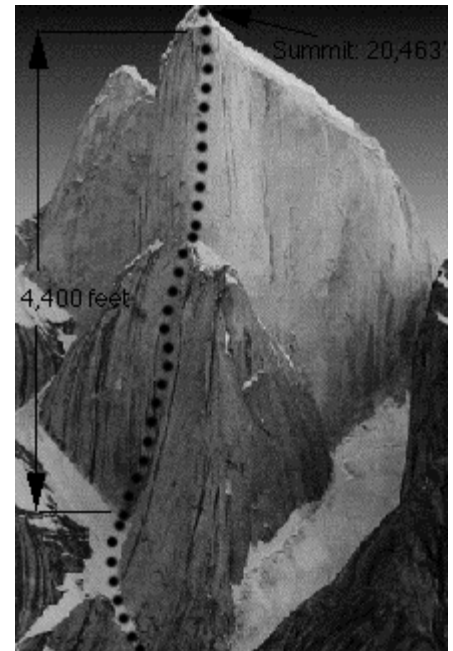
The Grand Voyage

by John Middendorf

"Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Distant shouts mixed with ripping winds as Xaver Bongard and myself established our last rock belay on the rim of the Great Trango Tower in the Karakoram. Below our feet lay 4000 vertical feet of beautiful granite wall; above, a few pitches of mixed snow and ice climbing which led to the center of our universe for the preceding months, the once elusive but now so near summit. A mixture of luck, tenacity, alpine climbing and big-wall skills, and a fine tuned logistical plan got us there. The shouts grew louder and were recognizable in syllables. "RAID DEE OH!" It was our Swiss expedition companions, Uli and Studi, who had opted for a climb on the nearby Nameless Tower, and who were now half way up its 3000 foot southeast face. So we switched on our two-watt FM transceiver, and expected to hear congratulations on our reaching of the rim. Instead, we broke into a radio conversation between Studi and Ace Kvale, who was stationed on the glacier far below: "Uli's ankle is shattered. He fell 20 feet onto a ledge. We're f---ed!" Then Ace: "Are you sure?" Disbelief and shock was evident in his tone, and the same could be said of our thoughts.



Needless to say, Xaver's and my elation of reaching the rim was also shattered, as we pondered the grim possibility of having to retreat to aid in the rescue of friends. We had struggled for so long to get there, having spent the preceding 15 days and nights on the vertical wall, with the summit so near. Without committing to a decision either way, we rappelled to our bivouac gear hanging four pitches below and left our ropes fixed in place to the rim. With night approaching, we spent our fourth night in our hanging portaledge at our highest camp. We had survived the preceding three days and nights in a violent Himalayan storm, buffeted by high winds and pummelled by falling ice and debris. That morning, we awoke to clear skies, chopped our gear out of the layers of frozen ice, and finished our climb to the rim. Our cramped and icy high camp at 19,500 feet above sea level was quite different than the hot and dusty conditions in Rawalpindi, where this adventure began.

Nearly two months before, on June 10, 1992, in blistering heat, I arrived at the Islamabad/Rawalpindi airport with a cumbersome load of two giant haulbags, an expedition duffel bag, a daypack on my back and a portaledge under my arm. At the Paradise Inn, a cheap Rawalpindi hotel whose name didn't really reflect its accommodations, I met with Toto, Francois Studiman ("Studi"), Uli Bühler, and our expedition photographer, Ace Kvale. Anxious to get our expedition under way, we made a plan of attack for necessary business in the city. Optimistically, we planned to move up to Skardu in a bus the next day or two, but we were in for a few surprises.

It turned out that we had arrived on Ede, the start of a major Muslim holiday celebrating Abraham's faith sacrifice of his son some years back. By an act of Allah, Abraham's son was replaced by a sheep in the nick of time. Everyone's hands seemed to be discolored by some strange disease, but later, we saw some bloody sacrifices of sheep in the streets and the Pakistanis ceremoniously rubbing the blood into their hands. The shops were closed for the holiday and we realized that we would have to adjust to a new (slower) pace in getting things done. In the meantime, the Rawalpindi newspaper ran a story on our trip, impressed with the photos we passed around of our intended route. The article was titled "Big Wall Climbers Ready to Meet Danger", and described our variance from the traditional big mountain climbing style that is familiar there.

After the 3 day holiday, we changed money, met with our required army Liaison Officer, Mucktar, and our cook, Ibrahim, shopped for basecamp kitchen gear and food in the wild and dusty bazaars, organized our bus ride to Skardu,

and dealt repeatedly with the bureaucracy in Rawalpindi. Everything had complications which kept us in the city for a week. We were lucky: an American/Russian expedition to K-2 had been stuck in Rawalpindi for three weeks. Bureaucratic frustrations can certainly drain motivation and financial resources to the point of determining the eventual success or failure of an otherwise well planned and skilled expedition.

We watched the K-2 team scramble as we scrambled ourselves to get the expedition underway. We traded stories of our respective Liaison Officers, volunteers from the army with generally zero experience in the mountains, and who are traditionally a ball and chain to expeditions. Mucktar (who we later nicknamed, "the Kid", enabling us to talk about him in his presence) was a hard one to please. We were required to outfit him with an archaic list of 33 items specified by the ministry of tourism, and he held up our final permission until we procured the final items: 2 "worsted shirts" and his pair of "foot gloves". When our bus was finally packed and ready to go, we were all quite interested to get out of the heat and chaos of Rawalpindi.

We were told it was a 18 hour bus ride to Skardu. Our magic bus, technicolored to make Ken Kesey proud, and complete with a variety of blaring horn-sounds, seemed a fine steed as we tore out of the city and into the country. Morale and confidence were high. When the bus ran out of gas ten hours later and with a major nationwide diesel shortage underway, it again seemed we would never get to those coveted Himalayas. Mucktar was starting to look helpful after all and tried to get some diesel from a nearby army post, but to no avail. We declared the Pakistanis: "Masters of Hangology" because they had an incredible knack for gathering around at a moment's notice to hang out; often, we were the center of things. Later, diesel arrived by truck to the now huge armada of waiting trucks and buses and we were soon again off. At every military checkpoint (of which there were many), we were detained for prolonged periods for passport info and general inspection. Possibly we were spies carrying supplies to the Indians, with whom the Pakistanis were fighting in the nearby Kashmir. Captain Mucktar relished in the formality of each checkpoint and baited the enlisted men. Later we ran out of gas again, but we were having none of it and the driver concocted a diesel substitute from motor oil and kerosene and we were on the road again. Perhaps inspired by our eagerness to get to the mountains, our bus driver hair-raisingly drove an continuous 24 hour shift, fast and wildly along the third world mountain roads. After many tea stops, consuming Chai and dubious looking edibles, and outrageous scenery along the mighty river Urdus, we finally pulled into the town of Skardu, 36 rough hours after leaving Rawalpindi.

Skardu is the capital of Balistan, the northerly province of Pakistan in which the bulk of the Karakoram lies, and seemed a paradise. Clear skies, cool temperatures, and none of the hustle and crazed bustle that we were familiar with in the city. We packed our 1.25 tons (2500 pounds) of expedition equipment and food into 55 pound packages (the maximum the porters will carry), and hired 3 jeeps. Again we were confronted with the lack of diesel--"Tomorrow we find diesel, Inshallah", but after a few days we set out for the ten hour jeep ride to the small village of Askole, the last outpost of civilization and the gateway to the Karakoram.

At first we were glad to hear the Pakistanis with whom we were conducting business with, frequently add "Inshallah" to statements, which we assumed translated to "In the name of Allah". We were impressed with their calling for their god to help us with our travels. For example, when queried about the condition of the jeep road to Askole, they would respond "passable, yes, Inshallah". Later, we understood clearly that "Inshallah" really meant "maybe, maybe not", with the literal translation of "if Allah wills", and viewed such amended statements with suspicion.

In Askole, we hired and arranged loads for the 46 porters, and began our 3 day, 50 mile trek into the mountains. The beauty of the mountains and the outrageous scale of everything kept us distracted and stumbling over our toes as we plodded along. We were amazed at the tenacity of the porters, who hiked in the cheapest of cheap plastic shoes, carried their bulky loads strapped to their backs with the thinnest of thin cords, and camped in cold and sometimes rainy conditions with the meagerest of meager blankets. The third day of the trek we climbed onto the massive Baltoro Glacier, one of the world's largest glaciers, over a kilometer wide and 100 kilometers long, and got lost for a few hours wandering around the gigantic crevassed terrain. Eventually we made it to basecamp, a small oasis of flat space on the Dungee Glacier (a "tributary" of the Baltoro). A Spanish team who had plans for a route on Nameless Tower were there, and we celebrated our arrival with them.

Basecamp was at first a shock to our system. During the preceding weeks we had frequently become pessimistic about ever even getting there with all our gear intact, and had been focused on this moment of arrival for so long that it

seemed unreal. The summits of both Great Trango Tower and Nameless Tower were visible to the north, across the glacier to the east lay Thunmo, an impressive perfectly triangular obelisk of granite, and to the south loomed the brooding form of Masherbrum. A pretty place indeed. By and by, the porters rolled into basecamp, dropped their loads and impatiently waited for their fee. Assigned financial officer of the expedition, I paid each porter his due, \$50 each, and toward evening, with all business done, the porters headed back, leaving us with all our equipment and mixed feelings of commitment. The remoteness of our location seemed to quadruple as we watched the last porter leave.

The next day, we immediately set to work building a kitchen and customizing our camp. The Spaniards turned out to be a friendly bunch, and during many cups of Chai, we shared food and stories, and quizzed them for info about their climb. They had ropes fixed on Nameless Tower and had been waiting out the preceding few days for better weather.

Later, Toto and I made a foray into the Dungee Glacier to get a head-on view of our objective. The glacier was a maze of crevasses and moraines, and after several hours of hiking we stood below our objective, the East Face of Great Trango Tower. It was more awesome and fearful than we had ever imagined. A huge beautiful wall rising up to 20,444 feet. Snow trails were billowing from the summit, and the wall took our breath away and mesmerized us. We studied with awe the Norwegian Buttress, the North East Pillar of Great Trango, and reflected on the tragedy that took the lives of the first ascensionists. Four Norwegians in 1984 had set out to climb one of the most impressive routes in the world. After 3 weeks on the wall, their supplies were running thin and two members of the team regretfully and selflessly retreated, enabling the other two members to continue with the bulk of the provisions. The two who continued did indeed reach the summit, but on the descent, disappeared and were never seen again. Since then, the Norwegian Buttress has been attempted on three different occasions, with a Spanish team and a Japanese team making to the rim but not the summit.

Toto and I planned the route, scoping the wall for new lines with binoculars. We could see several possibilities on the lower half of the wall to a giant snow-covered ledge system half way up. Above the ledge, which we referred to as "the Snowledge" (the Norwegians also used this name), there was only one possible line: a long north-facing crack system to the right of the Norwegian route. No big wall route existed yet in the Baltoro region which faced north. Would it be possible to withstand conditions in hanging portaledge on a north face in the Karakoram? We rationalized that we could always bail out onto the east facing Norwegian route from the Snowledge and concentrated on more immediate concerns.

The approach to the base looked like a major climb in itself, 3000 feet of steep heavily crevassed glacier and coulior travel. Two major hanging seracs periodically calved dozens of tons of ice, which then swept down the approach. Above the second serac, a steep 1500 foot coulior led along the base of the East Face to the base of our chosen line. This coulior turned out to be a major avalanche gulley for most of the snow and ice falling off of the east side of Great Trango, and activity was non-stop during the warmer daylight hours, and occasional during the night. We named it "Ali Baba's Coulior", referring to its mostly closed nature. It definitely looked like some serious Russian Roulette getting to the base, and we knew immediately that we were in for some major night climbing.

For the next three weeks, we established camps I and II, carried gear in stages to the base, sat out a few periods of unsettled weather, and climbed the initial pitches of the route. Camp I was dubbed "the Beach", because of its sunny location at 13,500 feet on a rock band above the first serac. Camp II was at 16,000 feet at the base of the route proper. We planned for 25 days and nights on the wall, and took 100 pounds of food. We brought a Markill Stormy hanging stove with 25 cannisters of butane, a MSR XGK stove with 6 liters of kerosene. Our fuel seemed adequate even if we had to melt snow for all our water (if we could find it on the ledgeless wall). Combined with our big wall gear and bivouac equipment, we had over 250 pounds of stuff. It was demanding, tedious, and dangerous getting the gear to the base. Once while ferrying loads, we got a late start at 3:30 am from our Camp I, and were not quite to Camp II when the morning avalanches began at around 7:30 am. Toto, ahead of me and nearly to the safety of Camp II, yelled, "Decide, up or down, in a minute you will die!" I scurried up and minutes after reaching Camp II, a huge snow avalanche triggered by the morning sun swept down the coulior dusting me with snow.

At first, we were planning to climb as a team of four. During these toilsome days of work, however, Uli and Studi opted for a climb on Nameless Tower, which had many fine established routes and a much less serious approach. Toto and I felt fine about this, having worked well as a team of two before on some of the hardest routes in Yosemite and Zion,

though we realized that our individual workloads would be greater, and that this route would be a greater challenge than either of us had ever known.

At long last, we had all our gear established at the base and were ready to commit to the vertical. As we were getting the final organization done at the base, a huge rockfall came pounding down above us. Among tons of rock came two Volkswagen-sized blocks which winged over us and were swallowed by the couloir below. Great Trango speaks! Nevertheless, on July 13, over a month since arriving in Pakistan, we jumared up our fixed ropes and spent our first night on the wall in hanging portaledge at the top of the fifth pitch.

We were climbing in the purest and most committing form: a small team of two, with only six ropes total for climbing and for hauling. Some ascents on the biggest walls of the world have depended on extensive fixed ropes for thousands of feet, enabling the climbers to always have a speedy safety line to the base; this technique seemed too cumbersome and timid to us (also known as sieging). We knew that the next day after climbing a few more pitches we would be committed since retreat would require pulling ropes down from hard earned ground (retreating off big walls without fixed ropes is in general a serious and time-consuming proposition). We also knew that our water supply, a partially snowmelt-filled 55 gallon expedition plastic barrel, would only last about a week. We were prepared to chop ice out of the contents of the barrel froze, but until we made it to the Snowledge 2500 feet above us, we would be in danger of running out of water; dehydration can be a serious problem at altitude. Every inch of progress took us further and further from the safety of basecamp, a place we were beginning to miss very much.

The climbing on the lower buttress followed tenuous cracks and flakes, with an occasional 5.10 free climbing pitch. Hooking, copperheading, expanding A4 sections joined major features. Many of the belays were in suicidal positions, due to the frequency of snow and ice and occasional rock avalanches coming from above, but we were able to find relatively safe havens for our bivouacs. We climbed in "capsule style", fixing our ropes above each camp until we decided it was safe and timely to move each camp.

As I approached the end of the eighth pitch, I noticed to my left an old and tattered rope hanging out of what we later named "Gollum's Gulley". A mystery. I put in a belay and swung across the face in order to grab the rope and to get a view into Gollum's Gulley, a giant corner system full of loose rocks and ice. The rope was frozen in place and it appeared, looking up the gulley for the first time, that 1) this corner system was a major drainage/avalanche gutter, collecting the bulk of the ice and snow shed from the Snowledge, and 2) we were in for some tough and objectively dangerous climbing ahead. It looked like a suicidal proposition.

Toto came up and set off into Gollum's gulley, pulling himself up the frozen rope. The rope must have been jettisoned off the Snowledge from previous parties on the Norwegian route. The rope soon disappeared into the ice and Toto began free climbing on the steep buttress to the right. Suddenly, the familiar big rumbling we had heard so often sounded close, directly above us. What felt like 10,000 softballs being dropped from hundreds of feet above hit us smack on. Toto managed to hold on and after an eternity of pain and fear, the multi-ton snow and ice avalanche passed by. We made a hasty retreat into the portaledges off to the side for some consideration of these new conditions. After some tea and deliberation, we realized that we must only climb into this 500 foot corner/gulley system at night.

The next three nights we were blessed with a full moon, positioned perfectly so it shed its light directly into our gulley. The climbing was tenuous and dangerous: near vertical ice climbing, insecure and unprotected mixed climbing, and aid climbing around giant loose blocks. The belays were in awkward places, as we were forced to place them on the overhanging right wall of the gulley to avoid being in the avalanche path. At long last, we had ropes fixed nearly to the Snowledge, and on day 7 of the climb, we hauled our bags and established our first (and only) non-hanging camp of the climb on the Snowledge.

The Snowledge was a thousand foot long steep ridge of snow connecting the lower Norwegian Buttress with the upper headwall. Our route connected into it directly at the base of the upper headwall, avoiding any major snow-walking. We dug out a platform, and cooked a cheese fondue to celebrate. The ability to set things down without clipping them in was a welcome relief from the previous days and nights, when everything seemed on tenterhooks in fear of dropping items.

On a wall of this nature, not only the success of the route but also the survival of the players is at serious risk if even one

item is dropped. Dropping a camming unit or a fuel cannister is sure to roughen the logistics but not irreparably so, but dropping a glove or a boot or a sleeping bag is at best saying goodbye to finger and toe digits, even with immediate retreat. The next day it stormed, and we gave ourselves a welcome day of rest and melted snow for water. We talked to Ace far below on our radio, which helped ease the remoteness of our home. Up here, the avalanches were less severe. Above the Snowledge, our route followed the Norwegian route for 3 pitches, then exited right up into a huge African shaped rockscar on the north face. We fixed pitches above the Snowledge until all our ropes were extended. On July 22, we left the security of the Snowledge and committed to the upper headwall.

Our route at this point faced exactly north. We got a little bit of direct sun both in the morning and in the evening. The rest of the day was cold cold cold. It seemed crazy to climb on the north face of any wall of this nature in the Karakoram. On the big mountain routes, climbers can generally find reasonable shelter on a north face to protect them from the elements. But for us, our only possible shelter on the vertical wall was our 8 pound titanium A5 hanging portaledge. I had designed it for the worst possible conditions, but here, my design work was to be put to a do-or-die test. A 20 pound oversized portaledge would have been welcome, for we knew that portaledge failure during one of the storms would likely be fatal.

After some serious aid pitches interspersed with difficult free climbing above the Snowledge, we made it to the upper chimneys, which were generally strenuous and awkward. We climbed pitches of 5.9 and 5.10, including one pitch which had several "Harding Slot" maneuvers at over 19,000 feet! The main difficulty of the strenuous climbing, however, was not the altitude, but free climbing with big boots, bulky clothes, and large protection racks.

At the top of the 24th pitch, we sensed that we were getting close enough to fix ropes to the rim, and set up our final camp. We were running out of snow to melt, and we could see that we were in for some bad weather. Our portaledge was set up in a chimney, and it was difficult and cramped to move around. The next few days it stormed heavily, and we dubbed our home, "The Yellow Submarine", because of the ocean-like surroundings (wet!) and the ambient light passing through the yellow rainfly. At times we felt trapped and doomed, prodding us to jump out of our portaledges at every lull in the storm, poised to go up. Once we did go up during a stormy period. The weather was raining and sleeting, but less severe than the more fierce conditions we had been growing accustomed to. "It ain't great weather, but it may be the best we get!", was our justification. I ended up leading an 5.10 A3 section in a freezing slush waterfall which drained a large section of wall above as the heavy snows hit the wall and melted to a slushing consistency. My outerwear held up to the ultimate test. Near frozen, I rappelled directly to the portaledge after finishing the pitch worried about hypothermia, but amazingly, it was only damp inside my thickly frozen expedition suit. Ace, watching from below, was amazed to see us climbing that day as we appeared periodically through the clouds.

On July 27, day 15 of the climb, we awoke to a clear morning and finished the climb to the rim. The last pitch was bizaare mixed free and aid climbing in wierd overhanging slots which I named, "The Wormholes". When we got to the rim, we got the news from our companions on Nameless and pondered our situation. After rappelling back to our last camp, Toto and I got grouchy with eachother, perhaps because neither of us wanted to make the call on the next day, if it was good weather.

Well, the next morning dawned as the best day yet, so almost without hesitation, we got together our ice gear, crampons, and some light summit assault gear, and jumared up our fixed ropes at about 5:00am in the morning. What looked like a few hundred feet to the summit turned out to be six pitches of difficult ice, mixed, and snow climbing. We found fixed pitons and slings from the Norwegians, verifying the likelihood of their ascent. The last section of the climb involved burrowing through thick unconsolidated snow on steep and unstable ridges, in an exhausting process of digging for 5 minutes per step.

Toward sundown on July 28, we made the summit, and excitingly took pictures of everything: the beautiful view to the east towards Biale and Mustagh Tower with the big giants: K-2, Broad Peak, Gasherbrum IV, I, and II. To the South, Masherbrum. To the West, a view of some mysterious and inaccessible spires and behind, the Latok/Ogre group. And a beautiful view of Nameless to our north. Below, we could see our basecamp which we had left an eternity before. Time passed quickly, and as the sun started setting, we realized at once that we still had a long way to go and some dangerous terrain. We downclimbed sections and rappelled off single pitons in a series of hasty descent maneuvers, and made it back to the rim well past dark. We rappelled and pulled our fixed ropes and made it back to our high camp around 10:00pm.

A long and hard day above 20,000 feet.

For the next three days, we rappelled the route, getting updates from our companions who had bade it back to basecamp in a horrendous 36 non-stop hour epic. On the 18th day after leaving the base of the climb, we returned to it, only to realize that the approach gulley had become a giant funnel of tidal waves which mysteriously poured down from above at regular intervals. That day, we had tossed a haulbag full of gear including our sleeping bags and bivouac equipment in an effort to lighten our loads and in anticipation that we'd be able to cruise down the gulley and be in basecamp that night. Instead, we settled down for a cold night and waited for the slushy water avalanches to subside.



All night we shivered and listened to the water avalanches pour down the gulley every half-hour or so. Neither of us had ever witnessed anything like it, almost a reverse Old Faithful. Toward dawn, we hadn't heard any avalanches for awhile, and got poised to descend. Then, one of the largest ones yet poured down, scouring the entire gulley for loose objects such that we would have been. We realized that with the warming day, the slush-falls would become more frequent, so we decided that it was now or never (literally), and made our way down.

Instead of descending the gulley, which would have been suicidal, we made our way to a 2000 foot rock buttress to the east. Traversing the gulley involved rappelling down the 25 foot vertical walls of the ice on one side and ice climbing (with 100 pound packs) up the other side. The feeling of vulnerability overwhelmed us during the few minutes at the bottom of the slush channel. With great relief, we made it to the buttress and began a series of rappels which led to the approach glacier. Luckily we hadn't tossed the bolt gear. After a total of 44 rappels since leaving the summit, we made it down to the glacier, only to find that the warmer days had opened huge crevasses which at first seemed bridgeless. Nearly exhausted, we crept down the glacier and finally made it to the Beach, where we joyfully celebrated our first moment of relative safety for the first time in weeks.

We strolled into basecamp singing "The Yellow Submarine", elated and looking forward to drinking some Chai and eating some real food. Uli was still there, as the helicopter's arrival was delayed by a period of fighting in the nearby Kashmir. He wasn't packed and rationalized his disorganization with the statement, "I've been waiting for days, surely the helicopter will wait 20 minutes for me!" Ace and I tried to convince him that maybe it doesn't work the same here in the third world as it does in the European Economic Community, but to no avail to Uli's proud insistence. Well, the next day, the helicopter came unexpectedly, and in the chaos of hurricane winds, noise, and spitting dust, the helicopter set one skid down, spit out a crewman who grabbed the first man he saw with a bandage on his ankle, and prepared to leave. Everyone was incapacitated by the sudden and overwhelming maelstrom, but somehow in the confusion, I grabbed the first bag I could find and tossed it into the same doors that had swallowed Uli. Luckily, it had contained his clothes and passport, all he had on were pants and a t-shirt.

When silence finally came back to our camp, we all looked at each other, shellshocked, and suddenly broke into fits of laughter. The camp was strewn about, tents and papers and expedition gear and clothes spread everywhere. Somehow the separate reality of our life the preceding months instantly became obvious, and already the memories of the wild times we had spent on Great Trango began to fade, as we began instead to focus on going home.

The End.

[John Middendorf's topo](#)

[Xaver's Topo \(exerpt from Vertical Magazine\)](#)

[Click here to read Xaver's version of this wild adventure.](#)

[Some international reports](#)

["Tears For Trango" about the fated Norwegian trip \(I had this copy at basecamp\)](#)



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Hurricane Mountain Works Rock Drill



The Hurricane Mountain Works hand drill is a compact rock drill holder which secures SDS and other drills, and allows for quick change of bits in the field. It is the first of its kind, and was designed by John Middendorf and Tim Martin in 1993. An interchangeable collet system allows use of any size drills. Standard collet (included) accepts SDS carbide tipped bits. Other features include a hardened stainless steel body with anti-mushrooming steel insert on the striking surface, a rubber grip with flange for hand protection, and a spinning wrist loop. Comes with instructional brochure complete with drilling tips.

To Order, contact Hurricane Mountain Works (not sure if still available).

Note: Petzl makes a similar product now, though the Petzl version requires the full length SDS bit. The HMW original version allowed use of SDS bits that were shortened by chopping off the SDS end, as the HMW collet system could clamp any round shank, in addition to an uncut SDS bits.

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WIND RIVER MOUNTAINS, WYOMING: NEW ROUTE ON MT. HOOKER



above: Steve Quinlan on an A3 pitch on Hooker

Location: Wind Rivers Range, West central Wyoming, southeast of Yellowstone National Park.

Difficulty: 5.10, A4, 3 days were required for the final ascent (with 4 pitches fixed).

Mt. Hooker is the premier big wall monolith in the Wind River range, with a 1800 foot just off vertical North Face. The granite in the Winds is often well featured, allowing for classic long free routes, but the North Face proper of Mt. Hooker is largely steep and split only by a few cracks. The wall now has 4 big wall routes on the main part of the North Face. (The Robbin's Route--now all free--takes a line on the Northwest edge of the monolith, and a shorter free route takes a line up the far left side of the North Face).

Steve Quinlan is the expert of the North Face of Mt. Hooker, with a new solo route, a repeat of one of the other lines, and countless other attempts of the wall spread out over a period of 12 years. He and I had climbed some routes in Yosemite, and as he is a summertime guide in the nearby Tetons, he suggested that I come up to climb a new route he had picked out on the face. In 1991 we attempted the line, only to be beaten off by a wicked snowstorm. The Wind Rivers has a short season in July and August, the other months being uninhabitable, let alone climbable. We were banking on having a short period of nice weather in early September, between the summer rains and winter, which begins in early to mid-September in the Wind Rivers. Our second attempt was the next year, 1992, but we were foiled

again by the onset of winter, with 3 feet of fresh snow dropped on us after weathering out a 2 day storm on the wall.

Each year we got our ropes a little higher: 2 pitches the first year, and to the top of pitch 4 the second year. Each 2 week expedition to the relatively remote Mt. Hooker required extensive planning, a 20 mile hike in with horses, establishing ourselves on the wall only to be forced to retreat, followed by a tedious hike out with 90 pound loads. Our third attempt was this past summer, and we wisened up a bit and went in a little earlier (mid-August), despite the continual rains which pour this time of year.

We hiked in with our horsepacking guide and 3 horses which we hired for \$150 at Big Sandy Lodge, humped our 200+ pounds of equipment over Haley Pass to our basecamp, and got organized in poor weather. Our timing was perfect this time: as soon as we had established our basecamp, the weather cleared, and except for a few slight showerings, we had perfect weather for the next 5 days. The weather crapped out again just as we were hiking out.

Our ropes had been trashed over the year we had left them there, and we debated heavily over reclimbing the hard earned and difficult (A4) initial pitches of the route. We decided to jumar the tattered ropes, though we could see that the sheaths were fully cut in many spots. We had left two lines fixed on the lowest section. One of these was cut, and the other was shredded and hooked on a flake off to the side. Steve jumared up to the flake, placed a belay, and while untangling the mess of shredded ropes above (whereupon one just fell free), discovered that he had be jumaring on a rope anchored solely by being jammed in a flake. The next jumar was mine, and required ascending a completely shredded core--the sheath had long been reduced to nothing--for 200 core squeaking feet.

The climbing above our fixed ropes was generally moderate, the crux being a roof which Steve led through a huge eye-shaped feature which we named the route after. Above the roof, which is at about 2/3 height, the route went mostly free on excellent rock. The route is named the Third Eye is a fine alpine big wall in a remote location.



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The Nose-in-a-day.



by John Middendorf

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Introduction

The Nose-in-a-day is quite likely the best one-day climb in the world. 3000 feet of excellent climbing, with pitch after pitch of exposure and adventure. The Nose route first went in a long day by the three-man team of John Long, Jim Bridwell, and Billy Westbay in 1975. Until around 1985, the Nose route on El Capitan had fewer than 10 one-day ascents (from the ground, no fixing). Now, as we approach the 20th anniversary of the first one-day ascent, it is routinely fired off in a day many times a season. Record holders Peter Croft, Hans Florine, and Dave Schultz have done it in less than 5 hours (in teams of two), simul-climbing much of the route. 5 hours is truly Olympic caliber. For mere mortals with a long rope, times of 10-12 hours are possible at a reasonable pace by a team of two fit 5.11 crack climbers, averaging 25-30 minutes a pitch.

Systems

A well coordinated team of two is the best for climbing mainly free routes (like the Nose, the West Face of El Cap, and the regular route on Half Dome) fast. Assuming both members of the team want an equal share of the leads, it is most efficient on a long route like the Nose if each climber leads a "block" of pitches at a time before the team alternates leaders. Each "block" consists of 4 to 6 leads in a row, with less than 5 total number of "blocks" for the entire route. The block system allow each climber to be in either a "lead" mode or a "clean" mode, and allows for a rest before the start of each lead (the alternative, to swing every lead requires each climber to jumar and lead in single pushes, seems to be more exhausting). The second will also be carrying the pack with water, food, and other gear for the climb.

After each pitch is led, the leader should fix the rope quickly so the second can jumar and clean as fast as possible. After the second cleans the pitch, he or she will then hand over the sharp end to the leader, and put the leader on belay. Meanwhile the leader reracks the cleaned gear and continues with the next lead. The whole process at each belay can be efficiently and safely done in less than a couple minutes.

The rope transfer during each a block are best facilitated if each climber is tied into the rope with two locking carabiners (instead of tying the rope directly to the harness). It is quicker to switch ends of the rope since the rope the leader is tied into will be incorporated into the belay. The second will be attached to both jumars, which acts as his temporary belay as he gives up his end to the leader, and puts the leader on belay with it.. The belayer will clip into the leaders previous tie-in and the belay at his leisure (but before unclipping his jumars!!!).

At the end of each block, the second will jumar and clean as normal, then take over the lead. Block changeovers are best performed at spots on the route with a stance or ledge, where a short break can be taken.

Training and Beta

To climb at an efficient level on the Nose requires the ability to cruise mid 5.11 cracks quickly and efficiently, and a good head for ropework and setting natural anchors. The best training for the Nose- in-a-day is to climb shorter mostly all free all day routes. Below is a list of good training routes . Before the big day, be sure to take 2 or 3 days of complete rest, and carbo-load the night before. Many parties start in the night, but it is quite possible to begin at dawn and complete the climb before dusk.

Much of the climbing on the Nose is either free or "French- free", whereupon the golden rule of whatever's fastest and most energy efficient goes. A typical section will require running it out 10 to 20 feet on 5.10 ground, placing or clipping a piece, pulling past it, and continuing free climbing. A0 is the grade given to pulling on gear without aid ladders. The A1 on the route that is best done with aid ladders consists of 4 sections, none longer than 60 feet, and total about 200 feet for the entire route.

There are a lot of tricks to climbing fast, most of which can only be learned through experience. One of the main tricks is to climb with a 200 foot rope (although the first time I did it, with a 165' rope, Dave Schultz and I climbed it in 10 hours 44 minutes), and have the ability to go for it all day long. Tricks aside, the route requires a well coordinated effort between partners, with good communication skills to ensure a steady, safe, non-rushed, energy- efficient ascent. Watch for the simple traps like getting a rope stuck below or some dumb error like that.

Training routes(the hours in parenthesis are average fast times for these routes; actually, they are my times for these routes and will equate to about a 10 or 11 hour time for the Nose)

Routes best done in "swing" style, where leaders alternate, and second climbs each pitch (no jumars are used)::

- Astroman, 5.11c (6 hours valley to valley).
- Sentinel: Chounard Herbert, 5.11c, (5 hours from base to top, 1 hour approach).
- Sentinel: Steck-Salathe, 5.9 (4 hours).
- Sentinel: West Face, 5.11 A0 (5 hours).
- El Cap: West Face, 5.11 A0 (8 hours valley to valley).
- Half Dome, regular route, 5.11 A1 (7 hours from base to top).
- The Autobahn, southwest buttress of Half Dome, 5.11+ (long day valley to valley).

Routes done "block" style (second jumars):

- Washington's Column, Direct South Face, 5.9 A1 (4 1/2 hours).
- Lost Arrow Direct, 5.10 A2 (8 hours).

Good potentially soloable routes for getting in shape and moving fast:

- Nutcracker, 5.8 (8 minutes 47 seconds: my record).
- Snake Dike-in-a-day, 5.7 (the approach is the main training benefit).
- Washington's Column, Direct Route, 5.7+ (a few hours).

Gear

The following is a complete list of equipment for the Nose-in-a-day.

- Rack: 2 sets of cams to #3, 1 each #3-1/2, #4, 2 sets stoppers, 1 or 2 sets RPs, slings and about 20-25 extra biners.
- Personal gear (per climber): harness, shoes, chalk-bag, 2 Pear-shaped locking biners, short daisy chain, belay device.
- Two gear slings (one per person).
- One pair of ascenders with aiders permanently attached.
- One set of lightweight aiders for leader when necessary.

- One 200 foot lead rope (165 or 180 foot ropes can be used, but will increase the total number of pitches). A second rope is advised if you want retreat to be an option (a 7mm 165 rope is light).
- One day pack.
- Water: at least 2 gallons in warmer weather.
- Food: Powerbars and fruit.
- Storm gear and warm clothes (optional, in case you don't make it).
- Headlamp (ditto).

Good luck!



Nose-In-A-Day Rack, 1984



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Organ Rock

by John Middendorf

So Walt Shipley, one of the most driven and inspired climbers I've ever had the pleasure to climb with, had mysteriously vanished from his main stomping ground, Yosemite Valley. During a work-day at A5 Adventures I get an out-of-the-blue telephone call from Walt: he's just been on an incredible solo binge in the Red Rocks, Nevada (which included multiple 5.10 Grade V's in a day, on-sight 5.11's, etc.), and is heading east to Flagstaff for a visit. It's just the opportunity I've been waiting for: a true go-for-it partner to team up with for some of the outrageous desert spires that I've been scoping since moving into the area.

As soon as Walt arrives, I propose an adventure: an ascent of Organ Rock, a remote 500' high fin of rock located in the depths of the desert. And without further ado, we were on the road. Walt then revealed the true motivation of his travels: a recent break-up with a waitress from the Mountain Room Bar in Yosemite. "I'm never going back to the Valley," he'd say. He sounded off endless sour details of the jilt, and I could see that he was pretty twisted. The only consolation I could come up with was, "well, what do you expect, special treatment?". I could see that Walt was in fine form for a desperate life-or- death adventure.

We arrived in the vicinity of Organ Rock at night. I was familiar with the complicated 4WD navigation to the base from several reconisances initially intended as solo efforts. Faint roads led to sandy washes which led to even fainter roads. After a few close calls with getting lost and stuck, we spot Organ Rock as a dark spot on the horizon. Satisfied with our progress, we pull the car into a deep wash and camp for the night.

Early the next morning, we continued navigating, and were able to drive almost to the base. Even the most remote areas of the Indian Reservation are populated by Navajo families in hogans, who undertandably dislike trespassers. Smooth passage in the Navajo backcountry is the combined result of discretion, luck, and flawless routefinding. We both understood that our presence on the "Res" was both illegal and disrespectful, but the lure of one of the last unclimbed desert spires overwhelmed the potential ill-consequence to life, limb, property, and kharma.

Organ Rock is the loosest of loose spires. By comparison, the Fisher Towers seem solid. Organ Rock Shale, a major geological strata, is named for Organ Rock. It seemed incredible that it had never been climbed. Eric Bjornstadt and Fred Beckey first spotted it from their ascent of Eagle Rock Spire in 1970, and spent days trying to locate it. When they finally found the area, they were enticed into climbing a more elegant spire to the south (Jacob's Ladder), and left Organ Rock to its own.

At the car, we debated over the rack. I opted for a full-on aid arsenal, but Walt convinced me that our initial recon should only include a light free rack. We hiked around the entire spire, and saw several possibilities, mainly loose- and dangerous-looking chimney systems. But one line (the steepest) stood out in particular: an awesome overhanging crack system up the center of the SW Buttress. We agreed to give it a go.

"It's an aid line, Walt", I insisted with the intention of heading back to the car to organize the nailing gear.

"Hang-on a minute, this first section will go free", Walt responded, and geared up for the lead despite my protests based on a broader experience with desert sandstone. Vertical venturing on the loose stuff with nothing but a cragging rack seemed nuts to me, but there's no stopping Walt once he gets that amped gleam of pure inspiration, so I consented to the belay. A 5.10 loose offwidth roof made for an impressive first pitch. The second pitch went at 5.8, and I arrived at a ledge at the base of the main overhanging crack system. The belay consisted of two slung mounds which a few kicks could have cut loose. It was looking pretty serious.

A Navajo sheperdess, tending a flock of sheep, wanderered around nearby while we were climbing. Hearing our clanging of gear and mistaking it for a lost sheep's bell, she rode her horse up to the base. At one point she was directly

below us, forcing us to freeze in place for what seemed like a long period of time. But she never once looked up, and eventually rode off puzzled.

Then the real nightmare began. Twenty feet up on the third pitch, Walt realizes that he's committed and started to moan about the climbing. It's death. The crack, though handsize, consisted of multiple loose layers of caked sand and made jams incredibly tenuous. The characteristic horizontal grooves of Organ Rock Shale creates steep bulges every five feet, and required awkward mantles on fragile shelves which would cut loose as often as not. Fractured flakes outside the crack were the most secure holds, yet not even the best would hold more than a 50 pound pull. Each move required an incredible balance between at least three carefully- chosen points of contact, otherwise the hand and footholds would crumble. The protection was non-existent: not only was the rock so friable that camming devices were useless, but even an Hexentric in a constriction would have obviously ripped through the soft rock. Nothing would have held body weight; lowering off was out of the question and the moves were far too tenuous to downclimb. A fall would have ripped the pitch and the belay.

The purest of psychotic climbing: Walt was in his element. Hundreds of pounds of sandstone broke off, but not Walt. I was glad that it was Walt's first desert sandstone experience, for his lack of expectation gave him a base level of confidence. He probably imagined that all desert climbing was as desperately loose. Any doubt, hesitation, or momentary lapse of concentration would likely have killed us both. After several hours of tense climbing, Walt called, "Off Belay!", and some blood returned to my knuckles.

Following the pitch, I found every move to be 5.9 or 5.10, and several times I almost fell, overweighting holds which were sent flying. The pitch, a full rope length, overhung about 10 feet in all. Walt's hanging belay in an alcove consisted of several slung television-sized chockstones which rocked and pivoted precariously as I climbed over them on the next pitch. I could have easily trundled the whole lot.

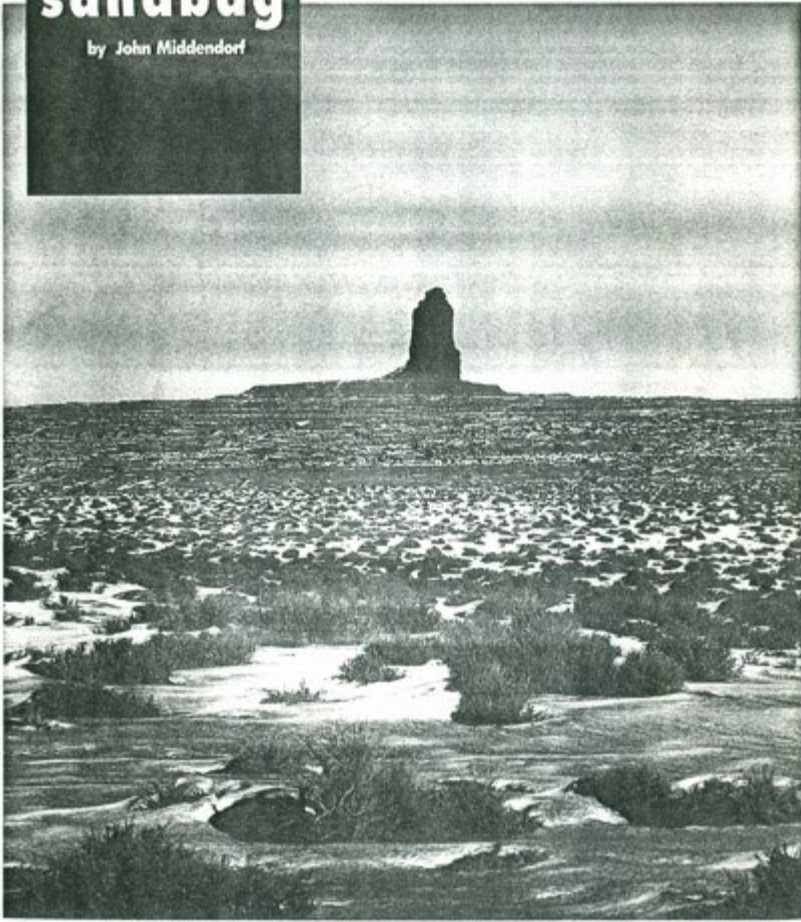
After two more easier pitches with non-existent belays, we reached the top. We relaxed on the summit and basked in the sun, amazed and relieved by our survival. As an offering to the desert spire gods, I left some Camels and matches in a waterproof container on top. After a while, Walt's memory of the waitress, mercifully displaced by the intensity of the climb, faded in. Sensing the beginnings of another tirade, we instead began our descent.

We placed no bolts or pitons, and all of our rappels consisted of slings around knobs or natural chockstones. It was indeed, a perfect desert ascent. We named it "Bite Harder", after a fine Yosemite camp cartoon. Grade III, 5.10XXX.

A feast of Navajo Tacos in Kayenta sealed the adventure.

sandstone sandbag

by John Middendorf



JOHN MIDDENDORF



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Pasta with Peanut Sauce

Sauce:

- 1/2 cup peanut butter
- 1 onion, grated
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1/4 teaspoon honey
- 3 teaspoons lemon juice
- 4 teaspoons soy sauce
- 3/4 cup milk

Mix all ingredients well. Add hot water until the mixture has a creamy consistency. Warm before serving in a frying pan. Makes about 2 cups.

Serve with your favorite pasta dish and vegetables (this recipe was once published in "Utah Celebrities" in the "John Middendorf" section--Robert Redford was in the book, too!)

Utah Celebrity Cookbook, 1995

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*John Middendorf has been defying gravity most of his adult life. He is the world's leading practitioner of big wall climbing, a mix of rock climbing and alpine-style mountaineering which requires climbing rock faces more than 2,000 feet tall and, by necessity, spending nights on the vertical plane. He lists fourteen first ascents, including: The Atlantic Ocean Wall, a face of El Capitan; The Kaliyuga, the northwest face of Half Dome; and Abraham in Zion National Park. A tournament-rated chess player, Stanford University engineering graduate, computer wizard, juggler, and tightrope walker, John co-authored **How to Rock Climb: Big Walls** with John Long, and is the owner of A5 Adventures, a manufacturer of hanging tents, called Portaledges.*

john middendorf

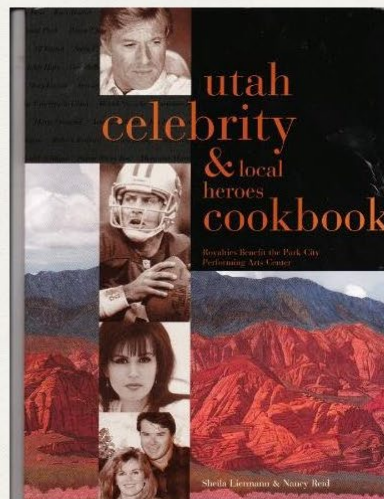
Thai Peanut Sauce

This peanut sauce adds liveliness to your favorite pasta or steamed vegetables. John likes the sauce over spaghetti or linguine noodles.

½	cup peanut butter
1	small onion, grated
1	garlic clove, minced
4	teaspoons soy sauce
3	teaspoons lemon juice
¼	teaspoon honey
¾	cup coconut milk
	ground chili peppers, optional



In a saucepan, combine all ingredients and mix well. Add hot water until the mixture has a creamy consistency. Simmer over low heat, stirring often, until cooked through, about 10 minutes. Serve hot. Makes 2 cups.



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Explanation of the A1 to A5 grading system for aid-climbing pitches

by John Middendorf

Photo: Xaver Bongard on the Wyoming Sheep Ranch

Climbing sections of rock which are impassable free, yet accept gear to allow progress, is considered aid climbing. Of most importance, aid climbing allows climbers to ascend the long awesome rock walls, faces otherwise unclimbable, located around the world in wild places. Special techniques, skills, and equipment are required. Aid climbing, though more cumbersome and complex than free climbing, is an essential technique for a climber's ability to climb, to ascend the vertical and overhanging.

The scope of this article is to define the A1 to A5 system of grading individual aid pitches. First a note on the overall grading system of a particular big-wall climb. A climb rated Grade VI, 5.10, A4, for example, indicates the the length (the grade VI indicates over a two day climb), the maximum free difficulty (5.10), and the hardest aid pitch (A4). The overall grading system never tells the true story, however. The same Grade VI, 5.10, A4 rating could apply to a 8 pitch, three-day route with merely one pitch of A4, and a short, well-protected section of 5.10. Or it could represent the difficulty of a horrendous, 30 pitch, 10 day nailup, with multiple horror show A4 pitches, and bold unprotected pitches of 5.10. Big-wall climbing is such, however, that the general difficulty of a route becomes apparent in plain sight, and the intimidation which one feels when looking up at a massive chunk of stone roughly proportionates to the effort and skill that will be required to attempt climbing it.



Ratings

A0: Also known as "french-free", using gear to make progress, but generally no aiders required. Examples: Half Dome regular route, sections of the Nose route on El Cap, the first two pitches of the West Face (either a quick 5.10, A0 with three points of aid, or tricky 5.11 c).

A1: Easy aid: placements straightforward and solid. No risk of any piece pulling out. Aiders generally required. Fast and simple for C1, the hammerless corresponding grade, but not necessarily fast and simple for nailing pitches. Examples: (clean) the non-5.12 version of the Salathe headwall, Prodigal Son on Angel's Landing and Touchstone Wall in Zion.

A2: Moderate aid: placements generally solid but possible awkward and strenuous to place. Maybe a tenuous placement or two above good pro with no fall-danger. Examples: the Right side of El Cap Tower (nailing), Moonlight Buttress and Space Shot in Zion (clean).

A2+: Like A2, but possibly several tenuous placements above good pro. 20 to 30 foot fall potential but with little danger of hitting anything. Route finding abilities may be required. Examples: the new wave grades of Mescalito and the Shield on El Cap, the Kor route on the Titan in the Fisher Towers area.

A3: Hard aid: testing methods required. Involves many tenuous placements in a row. Generally solid placements (which could hold a fall) found within a pitch. Long fall potential up to 50 feet (6-8 placements ripping), but generally safe from serious danger. Usually several hours required to complete a pitch, due to complexity of placements. Examples:

The Pacific Ocean Wall lower crux pitches (30 feet between original bolts on manky fixed copperheads), Standing Rock in the desert (the crux being a traverse on the first pitch with very marginal gear with 30 foot swing potential into a corner).

A3+: Like A3, but with dangerous fall potential. Tenuous placements (like a marginal tied-off pin or a hook on a fractured edge) after long stretches of body-weight pieces (here body-weight placements are considered for all practical purposes any piece of gear not solid enough to hold a fall). Potential to get hurt if good judgement is not exercised. Time required generally exceeds 3 hours for experienced aid climbers. Example: Pitch 3 of "Days of No Future" on Angel's Landing in Zion, the crux being 50 feet of birdbeaks and tied-off blades in soft sandstone followed by a blind, marginal Friend placement in loose rock which was hard to test properly, all this above a ledge.

A4: Serious aid: lots of danger. 60 to 100 foot fall potentials common, with uncertain landings far below. Examples: pitches on the Kaliyuga on Half Dome and the Radiator on Abraham in Zion.

A4+: More serious than A4. these leads generally take many hours to complete and require the climber to endure long periods of uncertainty and fear, often requiring a ballet-like efficiency of movement in order not to upset the tenuous integrity of marginal placements. Examples: the "Welcome to Wyoming" pitch (formerly the "Psycho Killer" pitch) on the Wyoming Sheep Ranch on El Cap, requiring 50 feet of climbing through a loose, broken, and rotten Diorite roof with very marginal, scary placements like stoppers wedged in between two loose, shifting, rope-slicing slivers of rock, all this over a big jagged loose ledge which would surely break and maim bones. The pitch is then followed by 100 feet of hooking interspersed with a few rivets to the belay.

A5: Extreme aid. Nothing really trustworthy of catching a fall for the entire pitch. Rating should be reserved only for pitches with no bolts or rivets (holes) for the entire pitch. Examples: pitches on the Jolly Roger and the Wyoming Sheep Ranch on El Cap, Jim Beyer routes in Arches National Park and the Fisher Towers.

A6: (Theoretical grade) A5 climbing with marginal belays which will not hold a fall.

[Click here to read about Xaver Bongard's experience on hard aid.](#)

[Notes on Grade VII](#)

Dome, yet certain individuals like Steve Bosque have been active in finding good routes off the beaten path. Other present-day games include speed climbing, all-clean climbing of previously-nailed routes, and no-bolt first ascents (which the recent ascent of the *Time Machine* exemplifies).

The future will bring new variations and refinements on these games, most likely with new technology spearheading the changes. Expect gear to be lighter, smaller, and more secure.

Modern Grades. The present trend of grading routes A5+ probably impressed the masses, but any one who knows better will tell you that ultra-specific wall grades need to be taken with a few grains of salt due to the incredible diversity of difficulties peculiar to wall climbing. For example, an A5 lead on the *Atlantic Ocean Wall*, besides taking seven hours and being the most exhausting pitch — both mentally and physically — I've ever done, had a dangerous fall potential (hitting a slab) beginning a

A3 by present standards; likewise, A5 on the original *Pacific Ocean Wall* ascent would be considered relatively tame by today's standards, probably A3 or minimal A4 — a reasonably safe 60-80 foot fall. This is beside the fact that these routes have become easier with use. Presently, A5 means a dangerous or death-fall potential on marginal body-weight placements.

Aid climbing just becomes more bold with time; to let the scale get out of control with grades of A6 and up simply renders the system useless, being dependent on people's egos rather than the nature of the route. Besides, a route with many easy pitches and one so-called A5+ pitch will not necessarily be harder than a route with continuous A5 pitches. Since it is so sketchy to put a number on something so massive and diverse as a big wall, it seems reasonable to stick with the basic A1-A5 system for describing individual pitches. Those experienced in hard aid climbing will intuitively know what is involved anyway.

—John Middendorf IV

potential (finding a slab) beginning a third of the way up and lasting for the rest of the pitch. This section was entirely on marginal pieces, many barely holding body weight, and none very secure. Other parties rate their pitches A5 because they are perceived to be at the highest level of difficulty on an admittedly-arbitrary scale. It seems shallow-minded to assume that one's own A5 pitch is harder than another's unless the other has been experienced first-hand.

Historically, the A5 grade has always been the most difficult thing going; what they called A5 on the original *North America Wall* ascent, for example, would be considered A2 or

This is the second of a two part series. The first installment described the gear that the modern well-equipped wall climber uses to ply his craft (Climbing no. 99).

Middendorf is a veteran of 17 El Cap routes as well as over a dozen other multi-day walls — all done during a 2½ year sojourn in Yosemite Valley. He has recently started his own business specializing in big wall gear and instruction (see ad this page).

A complete listing of all the wall routes on El Cap and Half Dome can be found in "El Cap and Half Dome, 1986," by Charles Cole, in *Climbing* no. 98.



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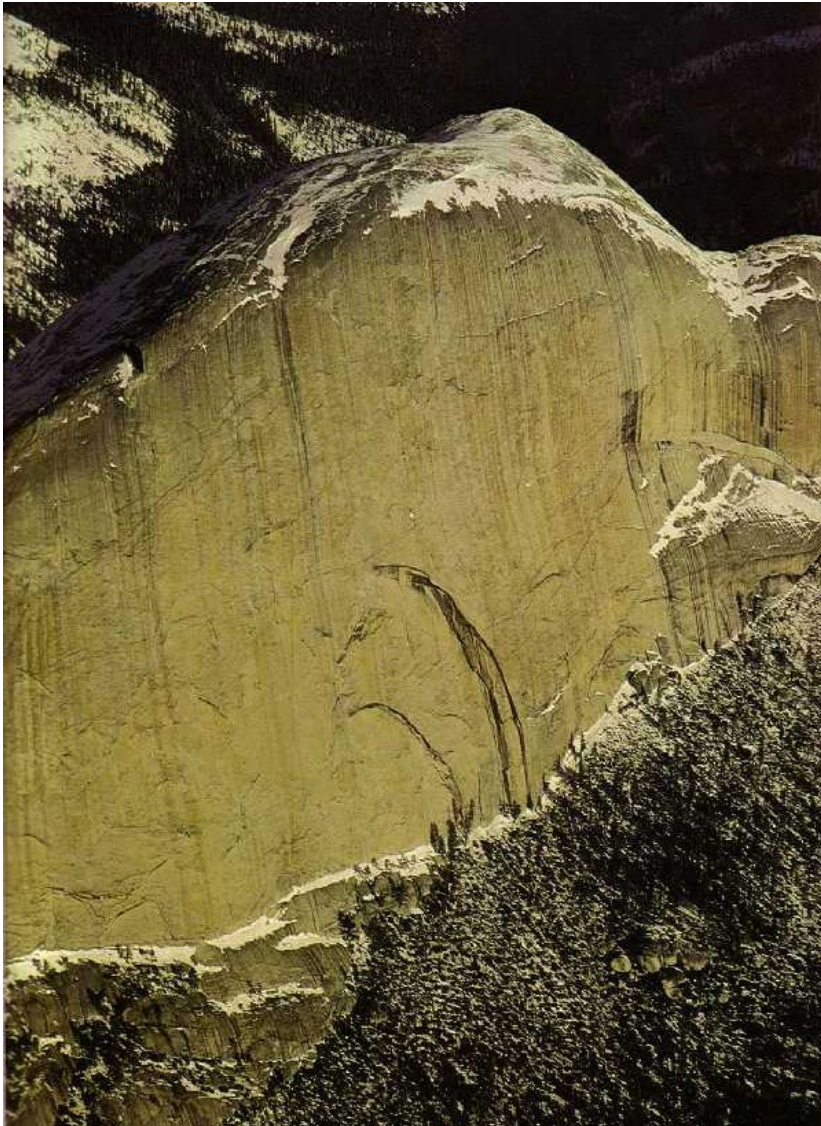


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Rescue on Half Dome

by John Middendorf

The South Face of Half Dome route, one of the Harding's finest masterpieces, is a 2000 foot wall. The upper 1000 feet is a blank sea of white granite, void of any apparent climbable features. Remote and beautiful, the route had a history of epic and failure. On the 1968 first ascent attempt, a severe storm trapped Warren Harding and Galen Rowell for several days, and they had to be rescued. The rescue itself was a pioneering event in technical technique (documented in The Vertical World of Yosemite)



Other parties had faltered as well, with reasons ranging from lack of proper hooking gear to debilitating summer heat, often necessitating retreat, and in several cases, the lowering of ropes, gear and provisions from friends on the summit.

In fact, the route had hosted more failures than successes when two Yosemite regulars, Mike Corbett and Steve Bosque, decided to go for a winter ascent. The season had been extremely mild--some called it a drought winter--so the venture seemed very feasible.

Yet from the onset of preparation, as the two made multiple six-mile uphill plods to the base, and then fixed several pitches, they experienced minor setbacks. In one storm 30 feet of snow sloughed down the face to pile at the wall's base, and Steve and Mike spent an entire day digging through it to get to their gear. It was a month before the longterm weather report looked good and they were ready to go.

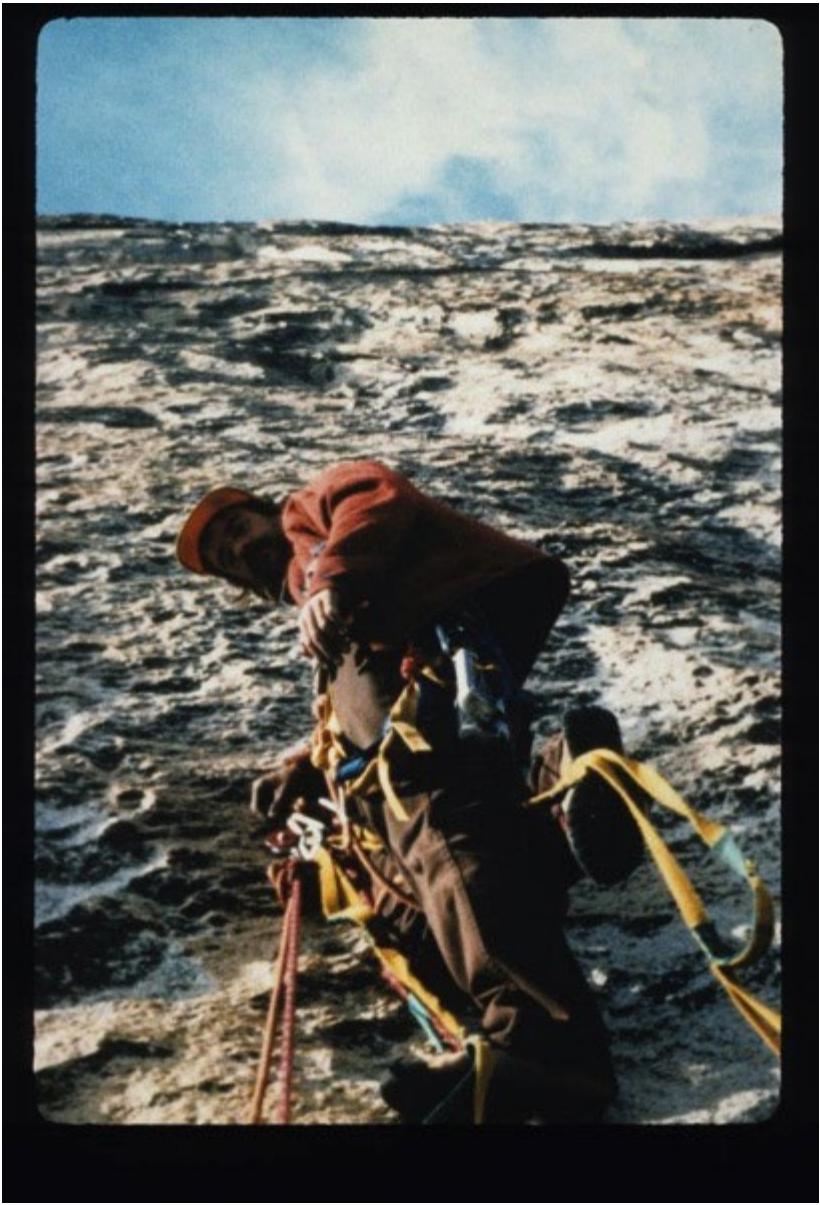
At this point I joined the team. Normally two make for a more efficient wall team, but Mike and Steve were both feeling a standard preparation-delay burnout, and they agreed to let a third man come along. Mike and I had done a few walls together in the past. His undying affinity for big-walls had always been a major inspiration to me, as was Steve's deliberate and understated approach to big-wall adventure, which he would unfailingly squeeze in between periods of raising a family and working full-time. I was really excited about our team and the chosen route. It was going to be my 40th long route (1000 foot plus) in Yosemite.

To avoid the more intelligent decision of hiking two separate loads to the base, I carried all my gear one-shot in a towering 100 lb+ haulbag, while Steve and Mike carried their light final assault loads. By the time we got up the Vernal switchbacks (only the first stage of the approach), I was staggering every step. The one-shot technique worked well for El Cap, where the torment of the approach is halfway over once you step out of your car, but this was a long steep uphill plod. Mike and Steve watched and waited, periodically coercing me to off some weight to them. With too much pride of self-sufficiency, I refused. 31,680 staggers later, the grueling approach ended as I pulled into their camp at the base.

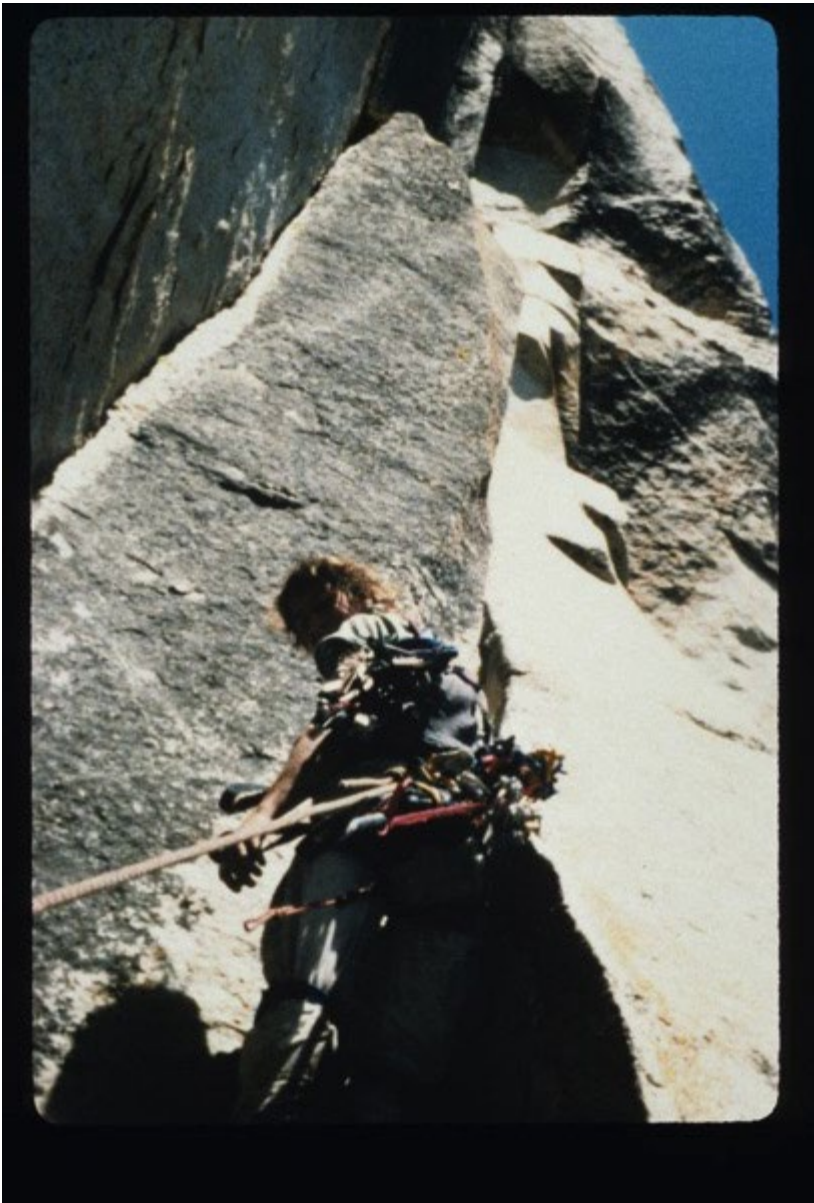
While bivied at the base a few local clouds spinkled some rain on us, but the next day we started our vertical journey in beautiful sunny weather. The first two days took us to the end of the Arch, a huge left-facing dihedral soaring halfway up the wall, and onto the Face, a thousand feet of 75-80 degree featured rock with very few cracks.

The eighth pitch, appropriately named "The Great Escape Hatch", is a contortionist's dream: a void gaping Bombay chimney, awkward as hell, like an aid version of the Harding Slot. After that, I told Mike, "You know, regardless of a wall's actual rating, every route seems require the sum total of my aid experience." Mike understood the feeling well.

The third day, in t-shirts, we climbed five of the 11 remaining pitches. I eyeballed each pitch for its free-climbing potential, immediately realizing that we had just discovered the the most awesome free-climbable face in the Valley, and I free-climbed some bathooking sections at 5.10a/b between bolts on my leads just to try it out. Harding had originally conquered the blankness by bathooking, a technique of placing specially designed hooks into shallow drilled holes. The climbing and location was awesome, and we often commented on what a ultimate gem of a route this was. We were having a great time.







The day's fourth pitch took us to the one of the Tri-Clops, the namesake of three large shallow dark indentations in the rock which from the ground look like caves (and with some imagination, passageways into the depths of Half Dome). The evil looking place had been Harding's and Rowell's demise, and their energy of desperation seemed to still linger. Though dusk was fast approaching, Mike had a sixth sense about the spot and decided to go for the next pitch, a steep bathooking pitch which ended on "The Ledge", which sounded good on the topo but turned out to be nothing but a small six-inch stance formed by a protruding flake.

Darkness set in midway through Mike's lead. Then, the frightening clanging of gear and a yank on the belay rope. Dead silence. "Hey Mike, you OK?". Silence. "Hey Corbett!" Steve and I flashed headlamps upward but all we could see was the rope disappearing into the darkness. Then from above came, "oh fuck, my finger's broken." Mike had popped a bathook and took a 20-30 foot fall, breaking his finger in an attempt to grab the previous bathook still in place. But a broken finger barely slows down a guy like Mike, and a while later he finished the lead. We set up the bivy in darkness.

Sometime in the early hours of Friday morning, clouds started to move in and a light rain prompted us to dig out our portaledge rainflies. Little did we know it was the start of one of Yosemite's worst storms ever. At dawn it was still raining. Mike suggested a general rest day, and Steve and I agreed. But instead of clearing, which our little box radio had promised, the weather became worse. We braced ourselves for a storm. Later, when the completeness of the radio's lie became evident, I jettisoned it as sort of a symbolic gesture of isolated finality.

On Friday evening the rain became a torrent and the winds picked up. Sometime during the night, Steve's ledge

collapsed, and in the minutes it took him to reset it he got completely soaked. From the relative comfort of my slightly damp ledge, I listened to his struggling and cursing and felt sorry for him, but there was nothing I could do, save for lending him my headlamp, since an exit from the ledge for even a minute meant complete saturation. It's funny about Steve: even when he had good reason to scream and curse, he would do so only as if playing a part; no semblance of actual anger existed in his tone.

Unfortunately, hours later my portaledge too collapsed. The portaledge suspension straps were slipping in the wet and icy conditions, causing the ledge to tweak out of shape. In the darkness, I knew what was happening: slowly my ledge was being twisted into a butterfly shape, one outside corner sliding down, and the other twisting up, as if it were trying to dump me out into the void. Any movement made it worse, accelerating the slippage, and it was too dark to see what needed to be done to fix it. Trying not to even breathe, I cried to Steve, "Steve, I need my headlamp back, NOW!" Only my headlamp (a Petzl Zoom) was functioning in the adverse conditions, and it became a coveted item. Steve made an attempt to return it, but in his twisted tangle of his nearly destroyed portaledge, he was forced into non-movement, even the slightest wiggle caused his ledge suspension to slip, which then resulted in the ledge falling apart (by this time his ledge had fallen apart several times). It soon became my only choice to either fix the ever-slipping suspension or just allow the ledge to collapse. In an attempt to retension the suspension, the movement caused it to slip completely, twisting the ledge completely out of shape, resulting in the end-tubes slipping out of their shallow side tube pockets, leaving me hanging in space with an untenable assortment of tubing and fabric. Instantly, everything--my clothes, sleeping bag, and self-- became completely soaked, as if I had jumped fully geared up into the Merced, only colder. I dug my spare wool clothes and raingear out of the haulbag, but they were useless against the deluge. A foot-thick sheet of water poured down from the moderately angled face above. Rain, driven sideways by the high winds, pelted us. I absconded my headlamp, and with a mixture of determination and resignation, I took my time rassembling the ledge. I couldn't get any wetter.

In the end the failing portaledges didn't matter, because by morning all of us were soaked to the bone anyway. Seemingly by osmosis, moisture would pour through the "waterproof" ripstop rainflies (the waterproof coating mysteriously fell off the fabric in large cobweb-like sticky sheets) and created mini- storms inside our portaledges. Continued periodic ledge failure and reassembly made for an unpleasant night.

By 10 a.m Saturday the winds were up to a steady 50+mph, with gusts throwing us and the ledges about. Visibility was nil. Then temperatures dropped, the rain turned to icy BB's, and our soaked gear began to freeze solid.







In desperation, Steve called for an attempt to retreat off the wall. "We'll soon die in these conditions," he said. "We've got to at least try to get out of here!" We exited our ledges and inspected each other and our gear. Instantly, fingers and toes went completely numb, and the wind and cold penetrated every bone. With uncanny foresight, Mike had insisted on leaving a rope fixed over the otherwise irretreatable roof below the 8th pitch. Still, that was five rappels down and several hundred feet to the left. As we talked further, we realized that the ropes were frozen to the wall in solid tangles, requiring chopping them out with an ice tool. It became impossible to retrieve even a short length of usable rope. Knowing that the Jumars would never grab on such frozen cord, and the fact that the ice-covered wall would thwart any effort to swing sideways to subsequent belay anchors, an attempt to retreat seemed sure-suicide. The near-certain nightmare of even the slightest hang-up in the rappels would result in a fatal separation from each other. Drilling our own anchors was out of the question, requiring far more manual dexterity than our frozen fingers could provide. Removed from The Ledge and our shelters, we'd be completely instead of partially exposed to the elements, and death from exposure would soon follow.

All sorts of potential and likely nightmares crossed my mind, each ending with three bodies frozen to the wall; and remembering reading about how Rowell fared in 1968 attempting to rappel in similar conditions from only 100 feet below us, I refused to try it, and was the first to disappear back into my portaledge. Sure, we could have rappelled a pitch, but we were dreaming if we thought our ropes could have been pulled. We remained as a team huddled in place, waiting.

All Saturday the storm beat upon us. The roaring sound of flapping nylon and typhoon winds deafened us. I realized how much my entire life depended on that lightweight rainfly. Violently whipping in the wind, it seemed ready to rip to shreds any minute. Steve's fly had been ripped apart by the wind earlier, and critical corner parts of his ledge were mangled into scrap metal rendering his ledge useless, and now he and Mike were sharing Mike's portaledge and fly. If either of the two remaining ledges or flies failed, somebody was bound to die from exposure.

In the meantime, unbeknownst to us, a rescue effort was underway down below. Werner Braun, Dan McDivet, Sue Bonovich, and Tracy Dorton had hiked up in the deepening snow up the five miles to Lost Lake, from which they could get the Valley's closest view of the South Face, and were trying to communicate with us using a bullhorn.

In one of the infrequent lulls in the storm, we suddenly became alert, hearing muffled noise. Instinctively we broke out in loud screaming to expose our position. We were asked "Do You Need A Res- Cue?" (though we had to translate from the distant monotonic single syllable loudspeaker communication). We looked at each other, agreed quickly that we were indeed in big trouble and needed help, and screamed in unison for HELP until we were hoarse. We couldn't see who we were screaming at.

Like turtles, we then retracted back into our shelters. As the hours passed, the initial hope and excitement of contacting possible help dwindled, and was replaced by renewed concentration on survival. We knew the top of Half Dome would be inaccessible: the hiking route cables were buried and frozen over, and the violence of the storm would prohibit climbing to the top. Uncertainty of our fate made the exhausting freezing misery just that much harder. The burning flames of hell didn't seem so bad.

Inside my ledge, I had to make constant efforts to keep from being completely buried. Huge water-saturated snowpiles would accumulate in moments: I would use all my strength to push it off one end of the ledge, then notice that at the other end snow was piling up fast. A minute of inactivity and the weight began to crush me, tearing the fly apart at the seams, and become almost too heavy to push off. This went on for hours. Because of the angle of the wall above, and the distance the snow had to accumulate and slough down, it was essentially snowing several feet per minute.

Towards dusk, exhausted by my vigilante efforts, I dozed off, despite knowing that I was on the verge of serious hypothermia. It was pleasant. Suddenly I was in a boxing ring, packed full of every variety of boxer and pro-wrestler imaginable, each mistaking me for his trainer bag before a big fight. One of them tried to crunch my skull when I snapped awake shouting, "HeyHooHaw! What?" Steve was stepping on my head.

Mike and Steve, seeing that my ledge had become completely buried by snow, had yelled for me with no response and thought maybe that I had died. Unable to see even where my ledge hung, Steve had kicked steps in the frozen layer of snow and ice across the near vertical wall to investigate. In my initial stages of hypothermic stupor and because of the dampening effect of the thick snow cover, no sounds penetrated--only his foot. "Glad to see you're all right, old buddy", he said before returning to his and Mike's hovel.

Night was falling, but sleep, I realized, would be fatal. I would find that my shivers would suddenly stop, while a temptation to pleasantly drift off beckoned me. I tried to keep my mind busy (some thought to new portaledge designs) and twitched my head, legs, and hands rapidly for warmth in my cramped quarters, by now reduced to the size of a small pooch's doghouse. In sets of 100, I counted to 22,000, twitching with each count.

Eventually I told myself that many hours must have passed. I looked at my watch. It was only 10 p.m. It occurred to me that we were experiencing some of the worst storm conditions to be found anywhere. If the route was steeper, things would have been casual. If the winds weren't accelerated by Little Yosemite Valley's Venturi effect, things wouldn't have been so bad. But mostly, if the temperatures had remained either above or below freezing, we would have been

sitting pretty, either in a wet rainstorm, or a safe blizzard. The combination of all these factors made for some of the most serious conditions imaginable.

Meanwhile Steve and Mike, with the marginal benefit of ensolite and double boots, sat on a single portaledge, one fly draped over their heads, beating on each other for warmth and to prevent sleep.

Sometime in the early hours of Sunday morning, the storm broke gradually and the stars appeared. The absence of deafening wind seemed strange and eerie. Steve and Mike were the first to break the potent silence, and we discussed first-light retreat plans briefly. Then it became apparent that the clearing storm was a dangerous blessing: radiation heat losses into the clear sky above sucked the last BTU out of our bodies, and the bitterest of bitter cold prevailed. Temperatures remained sub-freezing, we were exhausted and frozen at 8000 feet. We struggled through each remaining moment of a long night.

In the morning, the sun finally appeared. The relative warmth stunned us into passivity for a while. We basked in the above freezing temperatures and procrastinated for a few blissful moments. Another storm could be seen approaching in the distance, so we started chopping out our buried ropes and made ready for a horrendous descent. We were all functioning slowly and clumsily, but thought we could probably make it down alive. Not a bit of rock was visible, as the entire wall was covered with a four-inch layer of ice.

Soon, as the sun heated up the thick stratum, the avalanches started. Without warning, hundreds of pounds of softball-size chunks of ice would suddenly separate from the wall above us and crash down on our heads. Mike and Steve had helmets, while I stuffed soggy socks in my Peruvian hat for protection. Under one barrage, Mike, standing in the bathtub of ice that was his ledge, suddenly dropped several feet. The bolt supporting his ledge had popped under the strain, but the anchors of each side caught him. From above, Steve and I stared for a few moments at a wide-eyed Mike, still standing upright in his ledge. Wordlessly, except for a few "Hoo-man"s, we resumed our descent preparations.

The ropes were still only partially chopped out of the ice when we heard it: the characteristic whop-whop-whop of a helicopter, and an emotional wave swept through us. In silent disbelief, we saw the chopper pass and fly almost out of sight. "I sure hope that's for us", I thought to myself, and I'm sure Steve and Mike were thinking the same thing, because we certainly needed it. Then it returned, and amidst continued avalanches, locked into place hovering 100 feet above us, and a angel in a pilot's suit lowered out. Our rescuer later became known as the "Blond Angel", Petty Officer Davis, from the nearby LeMoore Naval Air Station. We were saved.

Mike volunteered for the first ride, and was hooped under his armpits with a "horse collar" and hoisted off. Steve and I watched Mike and Officer Davis dangle from the helicopter as it disappeared down the valley, and we discussed our lucky break. We jettisoned some haulbags with gear and sleeping bags and endured some more avalanches.

Eventually the helicopter returned, picked up Steve and took off again. Ten years ago, helicopters that could lock into a stationary flight pattern so close to a cliff didn't exist. Still, I was amazed at the pilot's ability to counter every gust of wind. The spinning rotor blades sometimes came within yards of the cliff. The wind was picking up again, and it seemed like the pilot had a more difficult time locking in place for Steve's hoist. Fearing the worst, I imagined being stranded on the wall alone, bivy gear tossed.

What seemed like ages, the helicopter returned, and it took a couple tries for the pilot to lock into place. Petty Officer Davis, dangling 100 feet below the helicopter, darted to and fro just out of my reach, signaling to the pilot for positioning. Then, with a thumb's up signal to the pilot, he locked into place right in front of me. It was a great relief when he gave me the OK and I grabbed his outstretched hand and pulled him in. The last biner which attached me to the belay was unclipped with no regrets, and hanging with Officer Davis under the helicopter with nothing but a hoop under my armpits, I went for the ride of my life.



As we flew towards the valley, dazed by the awesome view, I didn't notice that we were being winched up. Unexpectedly, the helicopter was directly above us, and I clambered into the cabin. A huge crowd and several other helicopters greeted us in the Ahwahnee Meadow. The extent of the rescue effort astounded me, with over 30 people involved (many of whom had hiked all night in waist-deep snow and were still near the base of the Half Dome cables), and four helicopters ready. The sudden feeling of overwhelming gratitude intoxicated me. The LeMoore Station and the Yosemite Rescue Team had coordinated the effort admirably, and it was thanks to them that we were all alive.

I stepped out of the helicopter and my legs buckled. I hadn't walked for a week. I staggered towards my friends, Jim and Tory, who whisked me away (barely escaping the pouncing paramedics) and took care of me in Jim's warm house, where I shivered uncontrollably for several hours. Jim and Tory made jokes about hiding rolls of dimes in the folds of my soaked and shrivelled skin. Meanwhile, over at the Yosemite Clinic, Mike, with lowered body temperature, was being poked and prodded, given IV's and warm oxygen, and a splint for his finger. We were all alive, and recovering rapidly.

At Jim's, I was mindlessly leafing through that Sunday's newspaper insert. I became entranced by a particular photo in it, nothing registering at first. Then I realized I was looking at a picture from 1970 of Warren Harding standing on The

Ledge. He seemed to be smiling at me. Coincidentally, the newspaper had done a feature article about the South Face the same day we were fighting for our lives up there. Whoa.

Later that evening, a unidentified feeling gnawed inside me. The transition from one reality to another made both realities seem unreal. I examined the feeling and realized that all my instincts insisted that I return to a soaked sleeping bag (a dry one wouldn't do), shiver, stay awake, and generally struggle for my life. It seemed we had been up on Half Dome for a lifetime, and I had developed a routine for staying alive that I could not shake.

Instead, I hobbled back to my dry VW van, pulled out a dry sleeping bag, cranked up the propane heater, and passed out.

The End of an Epic.

3 Hikers Saved From Icy Storm

Lucky Rescue in the Sierra

Yosemite National Park

A "window" in the violent storm that battered the Sierra this weekend allowed helicopters to pluck three stranded climbers from Half Dome's icy peak yesterday, park officials said.

"It was snowing heavily last night, and if those conditions had continued this morning, those folks could have been in a real serious situation," National Park Service spokeswoman Mallory Smith said yesterday afternoon.

Park officials identified the climbers as Steven Bosque, 31, of San Francisco; and Michael Corbett, 32, and John Middendorf, 25, both

of Yosemite Valley.

All three suffered mild cases of hypothermia from exposure to the icy cold and snow. Only Corbett, who also fractured a finger earlier in the climb, had to seek treatment from a local clinic.

Although none suffered permanent injury, Smith said Corbett's body temperature had fallen to the point where he was slightly disoriented and suffering from vertigo.

"If we hadn't been able to move in so quickly, they could have been forced to stay up there for several more hours," she said. "It's good we were able to get them when we did."

The climbers could not be

reached for comment yesterday. Smith said they were "sort of hiding out, trying to recover from the experience."

Officials described the three as "veterans" and "experienced climbers," who were very familiar with Half Dome. Smith said they had climbed the peak "hundreds of times, sometimes on multiday climbs."

"They just started out when the weather was good and were surprised when it changed suddenly," she said.

The three began their trek Tuesday and expected to spend from five to eight days scaling the mountain's sheer granite face.

However, friends became concerned this weekend when the chilly rain that has battered the national park suddenly turned to snow. They asked park officials to check on the climbers.

A search was organized Saturday, and Bosque, Corbett and Middendorf, were spotted close to the mountaintop. Soaked and chilled to the bone, they signaled that they needed help.

Climbers were preparing to make a rescue attempt yesterday morning, when the storm temporarily broke, allowing them to use two helicopters to pluck the three hikers from their precarious perch.

Smith said the window in the storm was "just plain luck, but we were ready. When we saw our chance, we made our move."

"The timing was very fortunate," she added yesterday afternoon. "The storm is already starting to move back into the area."

Our Correspondent



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Climbing with Reservation

"Hello?"

"Hey. I'm heading down to Flagstaff for a few days to check it out. I'll be driving from California tonight."

It was Jim Bridwell, calling about a previously planned trip to Flagstaff.

"Right on," I responded, and immediately started thinking about some climbing plans. I was psyched for the opportunity for an adventure with Jim Bridwell, the big-wall daddy of 'em all, and adventure abounds around Flagstaff. So I started thinking about a desert classic. Jim had already done Shiprock, Spider Rock, so of course: the Totem Pole, the outrageous spire of spires in Monument Valley, heart of the Navajo Reservation.

So after putzing around on the local Flagstaff bouldering and basalt crackeneering for a few days, we racked up and were off to Indian Country.

On the way, I warned Jim about the Navajo appreciation of climbers. I had already been questioned once, and on another occasion incurred a broken car window as a result of sneaking around and climbing on the reservation.

"Well, you know, summer-time and all, could be a lot of Navajo Rangers cruisin' about. They pretty much handle you any way they want. Could mean sitting in jail for a few days..."

"But I've got to be in Italy in 2 days!" Jim responded.

Thinking covertly, but with our true nature exposed by my blatanty decorated and abused Toyota, we drove down the dirt roads into the Monument Park, to the Totem Pole Lookout. Signs warned of further travel: "no cars beyond this point" and "no hiking in the park" and "no camping in the park" and a few others describing the local scenery. We hung out for a while waiting for the tourists and a few families to leave the scene, acting typically by stopping, taking a few snaps, and motoring off. It was mid-afternoon and we decided to zip past the signs on a faint side road, find a good knoll to hide behind, and prepare for the next day's ascent. The road kept getting worse and worse, until there was only one option: accelerate and hydroplane through the thick sand until a turn around became available.

We didn't make it, and the car came to a wallowing halt, tires spinning and the chassis beached by the depths of a giant sandbox. After struggling with it for a while and making little progress, we sat, listened to Paul Harvey and his slightly gloomy news on the AM radio, and pondered our options. Some dried-out bushy vegetation, bits of wood, and flat chunks of sandstone were absconded as tools, and combined with hours of digging, we managed to progress a short distance.

By this time dusk was approaching, and we were getting seriously concerned about our chances of getting out of there in time to catch Jim's plane to Italy, let alone climbing the Totem Pole, which loomed above in the gathering darkenss in our front windshield.

"What we need now is an act of God" Jim commented. Minutes later, out of nowhere, clouds moved in and a light rain developed.

"Holy Moley!" I commented.

The rain made the road less sandy, and combined with our inspiration to transform the signs that warned us of our fate into 3- foot long driving platforms, we invented a method of moving the car 3 feet at a time: dig, jack up the car, dig some more, put a sign under the tire ("writing side down" Jim warned, so as not to excessivley mar the signs), lower the car, repeat for other tire. Each 3-foot event took about 20 minutes, but it was progress.

All the tricks were used: we removed gear from the car, some of which seemed to disappear in the sand, and let air out of the tires.

On our way to get the signs, we approached 2 women with a Jeep Cherokee, the perfect vehicle for towing us out. Seeing our approach and obviously scared by the sight of two shirtless, sweaty men, fully armed with large wrenches and screwdrivers (for sign removal), they prepared to leave. Neither Jim nor I had the ability to stop them and beg for their help.

About 10:30 at night, after 5 hours of toiling, sweating, pushing, shoving, enduring wicked windstorms and a stalling car, we made it to a turn-around, and celebrated our first victory. The remainder of the road looked extremely dubious, but we agreed not to think about it until after we gave the Totem Pole a go. Later, it turned out that the climbing took less time and was simple by comparison than moving the car, though we covered about the same distance in both cases--300 feet.

That night, a heavy rain forced us to bivy in the cramped and totally disorganized car--and we didn't get much rest for our sand-beaten bodies.

We got up at first light, and set off for the Pole. Jim flew up the first pitch, eschewing the use of all the large protection arsenal that I had deemed "necessary", including #7 friends, Seismos, and Big-Bros preferring to free-climb the notorious and awkward wide sandstone crack instead. "Off Belay" came before I even had the chance to fully wake up from the strenuous night before, and proceeded to Jumar.

Starting up the 2nd pitch, Jim broke into a long joke (something about cows with halos and copulating indians) from the belay. I listened attentively from the middle of an awkward wide-crack stance/move. Another joke shortly thereafter (something about dick transplants) sent me well into the pitch.

Nearing the 2nd belay, I called down to Jim, "you're leading the next pitch, right Jim?"

"Well, I don't know, etc." But when he arrived at the 2nd belay, he handed me his line, implying, "put me on belay, I'm on this sucker."

Jim climbed thru the overhanging crack of the last pitch, and, with the clever tying-off of our big 4-piton selection, zipped past the "missing bolt section", which had stopped some previous parties.

From the top, we got a good view of the road, which meant that the road was getting a good view of us, and laid low.

The ropes got stuck on the rappels. A scary jumar to the jam ensued. We got down finally, miraculously cruised through the questionable sandy road section, and feasted on Navajo Tacos in Kayenta. A grand adventure.



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EL TRONO BLANCO, MEXICO-ASCENT OF THE GIRAFFE ROUTE

Earlier in the winter (February, 1993), I traveled down to Baja, Mexico with Jeff Hollenbaugh for a trip to El Trono Blanco, a 1600 granite big wall. Except for an ancient article by Scott Baxter called "Poor Man's Patagonia", published in Climbing in 1974, virtually no information has been published on this little known big wall area. The area is actually called Canyon Tajo, and is like a smaller version of Joshua Tree, with many great crags found within the granular exfoliating domes. The largest of these is El Trono Blanco, which extends into the Laguna Salada valley and whose big wall faces away from Canyon Tajo, and requires a careful exploratory-type drive into the area, and then a hellish descent to the base of the wall.

Jeff and I went with the possibility of establishing a new route on the face, although neither of us had ever set eyes on the face. I had sketchy information on the area from various people, including several widely varying versions of maps to the area, and a few topos of some of the routes: the Pan American, the South Face, and the Happy Hooker. We knew of the Giraffe only from a speculative line drawn on the photo from Baxter's article from someone who had once attempted the Pan Am route, and that John Long, Billy Westbay, and Hugh Burton had established it sometime in the early 70's.

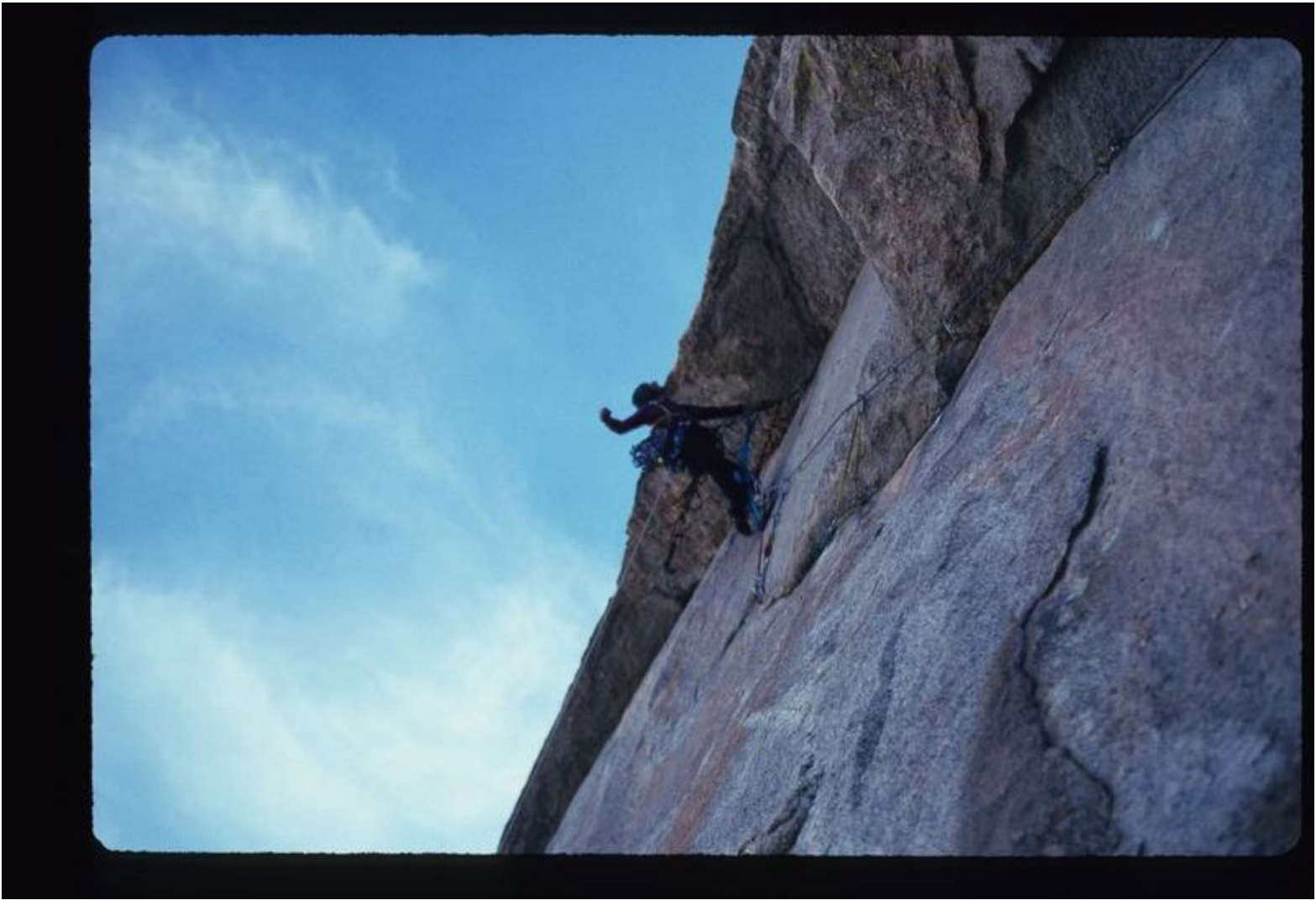
It took us 2 full days driving on rough 4WD roads to find the area, which required many miles of wandering lost on unmarked roads which branched off everywhere. Our maps, at least a decade old, were of no use, as they referred to nonexistent roads and signs, and long changed temporal features like "fence" and "burned out area". Finally we solved the puzzle and approached the domes after spotting them from far away while reconnoitering after hiking to the top of a hill. With no information, the approach to the base was just as much a puzzle, and after picking one of many gullies just because "it felt right", we loaded up our gear and provisions for 5 days and went for it.

The descent down to the base can be described as nothing less than hellish. It requires wicked bushwhacking down vertical gullies thrashing around in a maze of monster sized boulders, with huge cliff drop-offs encountered at every turn. Each section of the way had to be first explored without the mondo haulbags we were each carrying, as a jump from one boulder to another could have serious committing consequences if the path led nowhere (which it often did).

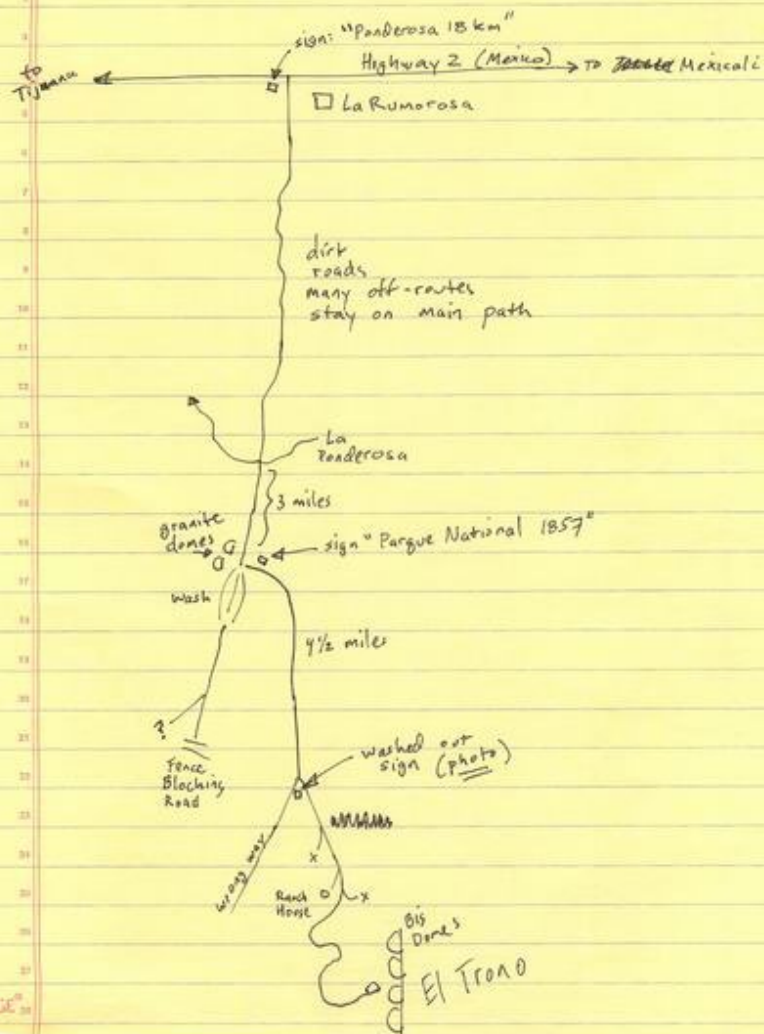
After a full day of thrashing, we made it to the base, luckily finding water there, and scoped out the routes for the first time. The Pan American is an obvious corner system up the center of the face. It looks like it will eventually go all free. The Giraffe is on the left and steeper side of the wall, and is aesthetic in that it is the only viable line on the steeper, left side of the East Face of El Trono Blanco, and stands alone on a sea of granite. We quickly abandoned plans for a new route, and decided to go for an ascent of the Giraffe.

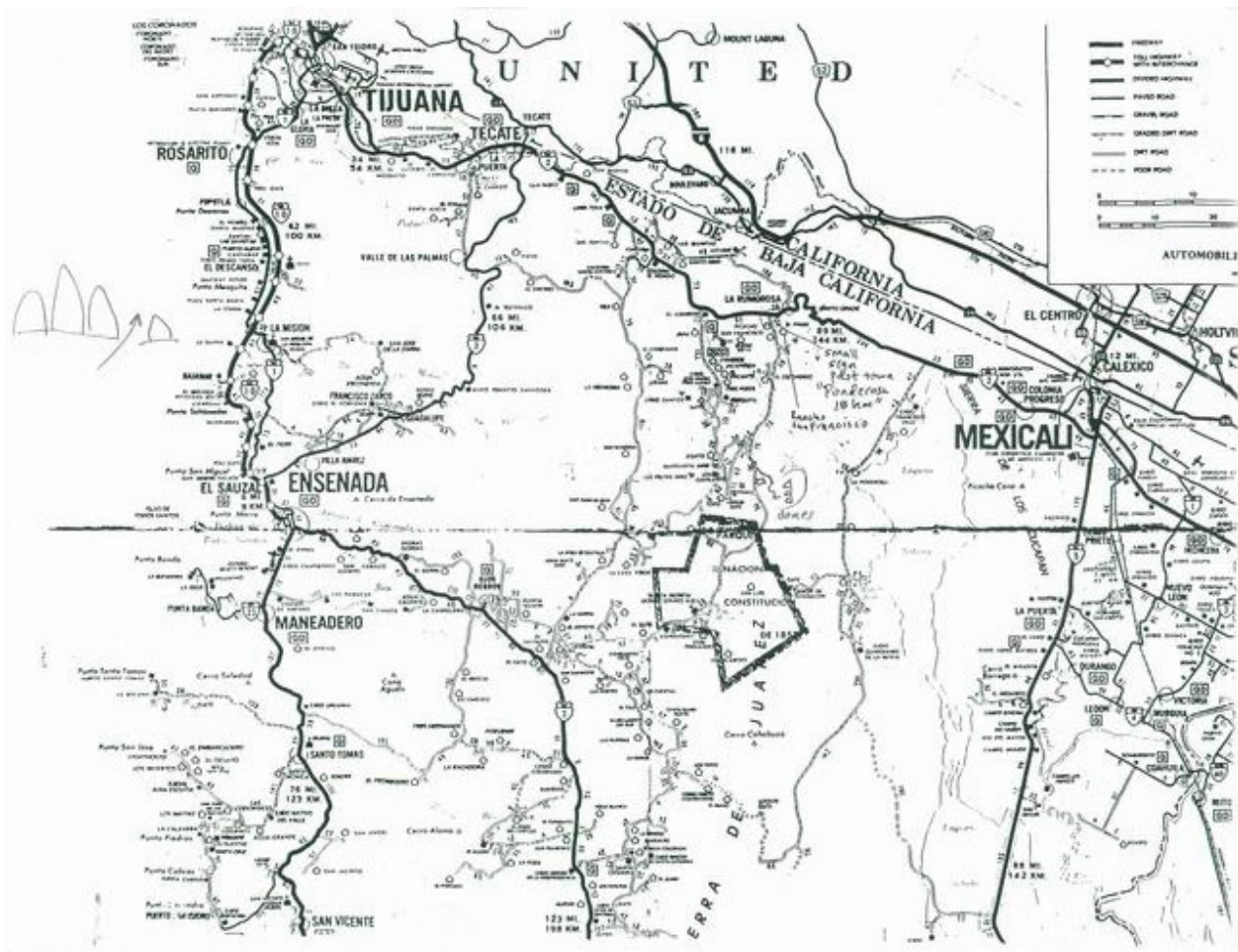
Each pitch of the route is excellent nailing, generally difficult (A3 and harder), and goes through some spectacular features and roofs. We were amazed at how the natural features linked up in such a way as to produce a continuous route. Below the top, as I was leading an aid corner that was becoming progressively more and more awkward and was leading into a wet and ugly section, I was about to yell to my partner Jeff that we finally had a stinker pitch, when I was suddenly able to step around the corner on a "thank god" horizontal ledge to moderate free climbing. The moment typified the climbing on the Giraffe: intimidating and improbable from afar, but all there up close.

From the summit, another major all-afternoon thrash through thick manzanita and around Goliath sized boulders and cliffs was required to get us back to the car. When we finally got back and out of there, the non-stop adventure of the past week was soon celebrated with some fine Mexican beers.



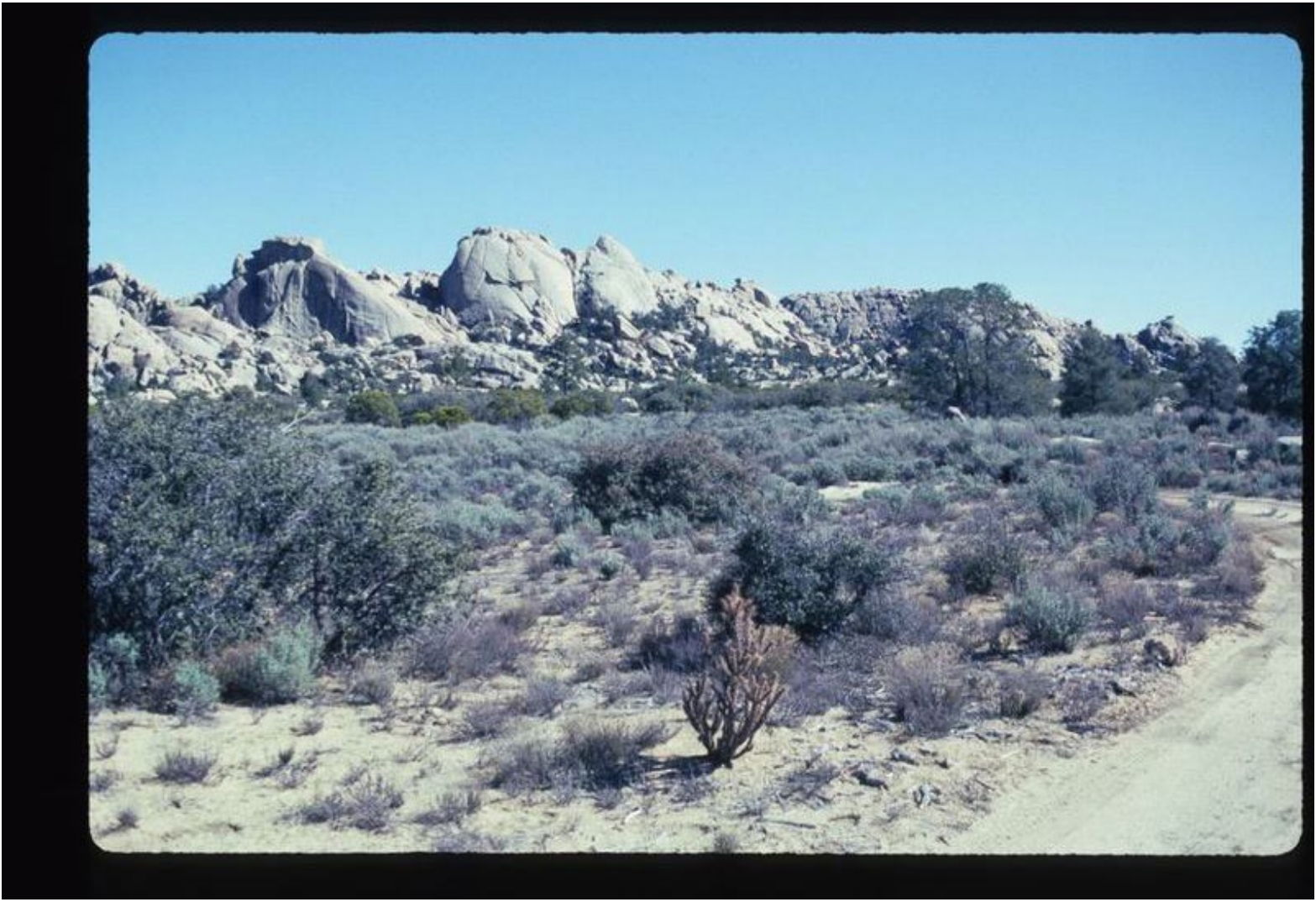
Detailed Map to Trono Blanco / Canyon Tajo









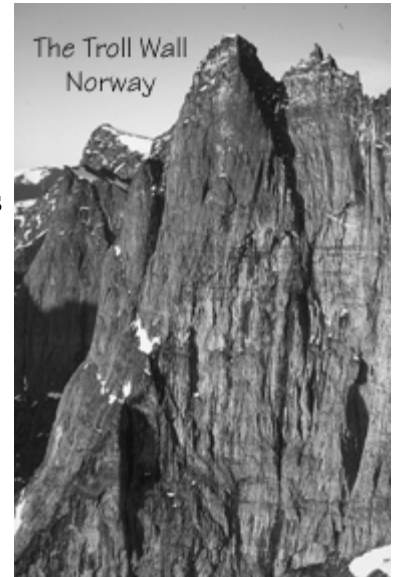


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TROLL WALL (1990s Update)

By John Middendorf.

To the climbers and mountain hikers of Europe, the name Romsdal is familiar. The Romsdal region on Norway's west coast is located near the small fjord town of Andelsnes, and is famous for its steep mountains, deep valleys, and spectacular beauty. In summer, the area is often sieged by wet Atlantic coast weather, and incredible waterfalls cascade down the awe-inspiring granite walls. When it clears, the area shines spectacularly in this beautiful mountain area. In winter, the sun only shines a few hours a day and temperatures drop well below zero, and the waterfalls freeze into 2000 foot columns of ice, only a few of which have been climbed. Many fine summer rock climbs have been established on every major peak in the area, many of which resemble the Matterhorn in striking outline.



One of Romsdal's rock faces in particular catches every climber's eye: The Troll Wall, a huge cliff which rises vertically for over 3500 feet. The rock is gneiss and bears little resemblance to the solid granite of Yosemite. The Troll wall sees only a little morning sun; even in summer, ice fills the cracks on this north facing wall. The rock is featured, but generally not solid, and continual rockfall is the norm. Snow and ice on ledges and features melt on the warmer days increasing rockfall and necessitate climbing sections of wet rock on most routes. Routefinding is a major challenge on most routes, as is the weather: the storms that move in frequently all year around are serious: drizzle turns to sleet, and falling ice and slippery conditions cause serious objective hazards.

HISTORY

In the 1960's and 1970's, as Yosemite's great walls were being climbed, similar feats of big wall endurance were being performed on an arena quite removed from the temperate California scene, on the 1100 meter Trollrygen (Troll Wall), Norway's monster north facing big wall. At first sight, the wall seems just another buttress of rock along a high and majestic granite canyon. Then the "trolls" are spotted: a unique series of spires and pinnacles formed along the summit rim of the Trollrygen. Legend varies, but possibly the trolls that once inhabited this coastal mountain region (and still part of area's lore), were petrified forever for their sins. Each of the dozen- or-so 300 foot spires has its own name, such as Trollkjerringa, which translates directly to "Troll's wife", but locally conjures up an image of a troll hag armed with evil spells and potions. After a moment, the size of the shadowed wall below the formations becomes evident: huge corners, concave roofs, and crack systems appear in the broken and foreboding rock face, which, if you happen to be a big route climber, is soon followed by a self-destructive impulse to approach the wall and thrust oneself onto the vertical.

In July 1965, a Norwegian and a British team simultaneously approached the base of the mighty Troll, a short 2 hour hike up the talus from the road. The attraction of this magnificent wall to the climbers of the day was the problems of finding a route up the massive wall, rather than the intrinsic pleasure of climbing the rock. Four Norwegians pioneered a route up an obvious corner and gulley system on the left side of the wall. They spent 11 days on a historic climb which has seen only a few repeats and is known as being "more dangerous than difficult", due to the loose and dangerous rock encountered in the gulley. Much of their difficulties arose from the soft iron pitons of the day which were difficult to remove, and the strong Norwegian ethic about clean passage in the mountains, which meant that no equipment could be left fixed. The strong Norwegian ethic of keeping their environment pristine frowns strongly to this day to climbing litter, like fixed ropes left behind after aborted attempts.

The team of three English climbers decided to take a more direct line up the center of the face. After a masterpiece of

route-finding up dubious crack-lines, traversing blindly around columns of loose rock, and climbing long steep walls capped by imposing overhangs, much of which at the highest free and aid standard of the day, they reached the top in 5 days of continuous climbing. It was a great day for the Rimmond Mountaineering Club. The Rimmond route, as it is now known, has become the most popular route on the wall and is routinely climbed in a day.

In 1967 a French team climbed a beautiful directissima up the center of the steepest section of the cliff. The team spent 21 days fixing ropes to within 600 feet of the summit, then continued to the top in a single push. In 1971 the route received a second ascent by a determined British team in 8 days of bad weather. During this period the wall (and especially the French Directissima) had seen many attempts but few successes.

In 1972, eschewing the problems with fixed ropes, the poet-climber Ed Drummond teamed up with his friend Hugh Drummond (no relation) and took on the obvious remaining challenge: to establish a new route on the steepest part of the wall without recourse to siege climbing. Their epic climb is truly a testament to human perseverance. With only 12 days of rations, the Drummondteam were slowed by violent storms that pinned them for days at a time in their frail hammocks or on tiny stances. After 20 days of difficult climbing, the pair topped out in a very exhausted condition, having had no food or water for the last three days on the wall. They named their route, "The Arch Wall".

Since these historic days, 6 more routes have been added to the Troll, several of which present a challenge to the big wall climber. The potential for modern aid lines is relatively untapped: all ten of the established routes follow major crack lines, yet many new routes with minimal bolting look possible using advanced aid techniques. Copperheads are relatively unheard of in Norway. Several routes go at a high free-climbing standard: eliminating the aid on established routes by free climbing bold sections of difficult rock has been a current trend and is likely to continue on the Troll. The other current trend is to climb the established routes in winter. Winter conditions on the Troll are extreme and compete for severity with the most remote mountain ranges of the world.

ROUTE INFORMATION

Norwegian Route.

VI, 5.10, A3. 3 or 4 ascents. 1200 meters. First ascent in 1965 by Leif Pettersen, Odd Eliassen, John Teigland, and Ole Enersen. Winter attempts, but no ascents. In winter conditions this is a hideously difficult mixed (ice and big-wall) route.

French Route.

VI, 5.10, A4. 5 or 6 ascents. 1100 meters. First ascent in 1967 by Yves Boussard, Jerome Brunet, Patrick Cordier, Claude Deck and Jean Frehel. First winter ascent (Polish) in 1974 by W. Kurtyka, M. Kesiki, R. Kwalewski, and T. Piotrowski. A long classic directissima. Portaledge and aid climbing gear a necessity. The route has gone largely free, but the roofs at 2/3 height present a difficulty. Direct finish added by Polish team in 1973 in winter.

Arch Wall.

VI, 5.11-, A4+. 3 or 4 ascents. 1100 meters. First ascent in 1972 by Ed Drummond and Hugh Drummond. This 3,500 foot route received its first winter ascent in 1994 by a strong Polish team consisting of J. Fluder, S. Piecuch, and J. Golab. Second ascensionist Aslak Aastorp (who climbed it with American expatriate and big wall ace Tom Cosgriff who now lives in Oslo) reports, "a portaledge is a great advantage on this route. Eight to twelve climbing days with a lot of skyhooking. A free ascent is thinkable but will require a lot of cleaning and a very bold climber, otherwise you would have to 'bolt to death' one of Norway's finest and most historical aid-climbs."

Trolldom (Troll Magic).

VI, 5.11, A3. 1 ascent. 1000 meters. FA 1985 by O. Vadla, L. Magnusen. A first ascent in impeccable style. Two

climbers running up a new line during 2 days of almost nonstop climbing (they were worried about a bad weather forecast). The route is mostly free with a few aid pitches. The first pitches are always wet, but the line looks excellent. Two or three days with free climbing equipment.

Swedish Route.

V, 5.11- Many ascents. 1000 meters. First ascent by a L.G. Johansson, T. Hilsson in June, 1978. First Free ascent by Hans Christian Doseth, H. Nesheim, and K Svanemyr. First Winter ascent by HC Doseth, C. Brooks, and S. Bancroft in 1980. The Swedish route is one of the two classics on the wall. Lots of bivouac sites. Average time: 2 days, but has been done in 13 hours.

Sleepwalkers Route (Via el Cami de Somnis)

. VI, 5.10, A3. 1 ascent. 1000 meters. First ascent by P. Xavier Porta, J. Grau, and JC Castevelli (Spanish) in June 1986 during a 14 day period on the wall. This big-wall route is now considered a variation of both Raspberry Dream and the Swedish routes.

Raspberry Dream

VI, 5.12- 3 ascents. 1000 meters. First ascent by Japanese climbers in July 1986. First winter ascent by A. Aastorp and O Vadla in 1987. First free ascent by Aslak Aastorp, Oyvind Vadla, and K Klementsén in 1987. What is now called Raspberry Dream is a free route that combines most of the original Raspberry Dream line and includes sections from both the Rimmond Route and the Sleepwalkers route. Rockfall in 1991 may have affected the route. Has been climbed in 3 days with a free climbing rack and no big wall gear.

Rimmond Route.

V, 5.10+ Many ascents. 950 meters. FA 1965 A. Howard, J. Amatt, B. Tweedale. First winter ascent in 1976 by a Czech team of M. Smid, V Sirl, J Janis, J Raconcaj and P Plachecky. First free ascent by Hans Christian Doseth and Ragnild Amundsen in 1979. First solo ascent in 1982 by B Ostigard. The Rimmond is the classic of the Troll, and has been done in as fast as 8- 1/2 hours. It is the only route on Troll that has seen roped-solo ascents (several), including the first female solo ascent in summer 1994 by Anne Grete Nebell (who has also climbed several other routes on the Troll).

Trollkjerringa (Troll's Wife).

VI, 5.11 2 ascents. 800 meters. FA Winter 1982 by Hans Christian Doseth, Choe Brooks, Havard and Sjur Nesheim. First free ascent (2nd ascent) Summer 1982 by HC Doseth and Masakazu Fujiwara (Japanese climber who seconded the whole route). Hans Christian Doseth, who died on the Great Trango Tower in 1984, was a visionary Norwegian climber climbed many routes on the Troll and was legendary for his big wall and bold free climbs. This serious route is a great independent dihedral line which does not intersect any other route. Plan for 3 or 4 days with free climbing rack and possibly a portaledge. Route is rumored to be sustained, poorly protected, and understated by its given grade.

Dod At Alla/Prektige Blonde Vikinger (Death to All/Pretty Blond Vikings).

VI, 5.11, A4. 600 meters (plus 400 meter approach ramp). First and only ascent in 10 days in winter 1986 by Aslak Aastorp, Oyvind Vadla, Bernt Pedersen, and Oystein Bardsnes. The first ascensionists did not have to place a single bolt on this magnificent overhanging crack and corner system on the right margin of the wall. The difficult approach to this route up a 1500 foot ramp system is perhaps easier in winter, as it has caused a few failed attempts to repeat the route in summer. The first half of this route goes up thin aid cracks in clean compact granite (similar to the right side of El Cap), while the latter half continues up steep free climbing cracks. Tops out at the Bruraskaret Col, one of the spots where the BASE jumpers launch from. NOTE: In the small nearby town of Andalsnes, where all the town folks are familiar with the routes and climbers of the Troll, "Dod at Alla" has been renamed "The Cathedral" for tourist industry reasons.

"Prektige" is difficult to translate (the direct translation means "excellent"), but infers a goody two-shoes meaning.

GENERAL NOTES:

WEATHER/SEASON

The weather can be fine anytime from the middle of June to the beginning of October, but the best weather months are generally in July or August. The weather comes in directly from the coast a few miles away, and a general drizzle pushed in by the warm and wet Gulf Stream winds is prevalent in the summer, yet most climbs are endured in such conditions. Generally, the wall needs several days of good weather after a storm to clear snow from the face before conditions are optimal.

GEAR

Similar to El Cap in Yosemite, the gear depends on the route. The fast routes (the Rimmond Route and the Swedish Route being the most popular) are climbed "Nose-in-a-day" style: carrying only a light pack and free climbing gear. The more involved routes (like the Arch Wall) require the full big-wall rack, portaledge, 10-12 days of food and water, stove, bivy gear, etc.

GETTING THERE AND CAMPING

Andalsnes is in the center of the mountainous region of Romsdal, home of the Troll. Trains from Oslo, the capital of Norway, can be linked to Andalsnes, which is only a few miles from the Troll wall and many other climbing and sport climbing areas. Before planning any trip to the area, contact the AAK Fjellsportsenter, the hub of outdoor activity for the area which offers everything for the outdoor adventurer, including information about all the activities in Romsdal and lessons in climbing, telemarking and ice climbing. AAK offers lodging at about \$13 a night in a hospitable hut with all the amenities and a nice climbing library too. Mary Nord, the proprietor of the hostel, speaks English and offers excellent Norwegian cuisine for the guests at a reasonable price. AAK Mountain Center offers information about how to get discounts of 30% off train travel from Oslo to Andalsnes. There are also several huts in the mountains which require hiking to. Andalsnes is a small town with several markets, but for major food and provision purchases, it is better to buy in Oslo, where prices are less.



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Trango Primer

by John Middendorf



NEW!: Rare Italian Topo Map of the Baltoro Region

[Baltoro Map Jpeg version](#)

[Baltoro Map Acrobat file](#)

INTRODUCTION/HISTORY

Those who have passed through the small camping spot of Urdukas on the way to the higher giants of K-2, the Gasherbrums, or Broad Peak may have seen the Trango Tower massif across the mighty Baltoro Glacier. The east face of Great Trango Tower and Nameless Tower (AKA: "Trango Tower") are among the largest vertical faces of the world. It wasn't until 1975 that the area opened for climbing after being closed for many years and Nameless Tower was ascended for the first time by a strong British team on their second attempt in 1976. Not until 1987 did Nameless Tower see its second ascent by a new route by a Yugoslav team. Great Trango Tower's main summit (6286 m) was first climbed in 1977 by Galen Rowell, John Roskelley, Kim Schmitz, and Dennis Hennek by the easiest route up the western side. Great Trango is rather a large peak with three main summits, all over 6000 meters. In 1984, the 5000 foot Norwegian Buttress was the first route established on the massive East Face, which led to the first ascent of the East Summit (6231 meters). See Appendix A for a complete list of ascents on Great Trango and Trango Towers.

THE CLIMBS

To date, Nameless has 8 routes to its summit, all on its Southeast and Southwest faces. Great Trango has 2 big-wall routes (and one variation) up its East/Northeast Face. Several alpine routes go up the Northwest and West sides of Great Trango. The wall routes are on good quality granite which resembles a cross between the clean compact granite of Yosemite and the coarse granular granite of City of Rocks. Nameless Tower is more featured than Great Trango with more cracks and possible lines. Routes on Nameless are approached from either the Trango or Dungee Glaciers, while Great Trango's wall routes are approached from the Dungee Glacier. Great Trango's approach is more serious and dangerous than the Nameless approaches.

WEATHER/SEASON

In general the weather was fine for our recent 1992 expedition in June and July. It never got excessively windy and the storms were generally mild, though at times they got fierce. Later in the season is also considered fine (August, September), but the frequency of avalanches increases later in the season making some of the approaches too dangerous. This area of the Himalaya sees very little monsoon action.

TACTICS

Many of the routes have been established with siege tactics (i.e. large quantities of fixed ropes) which is a more cautious method of ascent but cumbersome and time consuming. The Norwegian Butress was established in the purest of pure form, with only six ropes used for the entire climb. The Grand Voyage was also established in this style (known as "Capsule Style"). This summer, two teams of Spanish climbers repeated routes in fast time on Nameless Tower with minimal fixed ropes and gear.

CLIMBING GEAR

Big wall racks, selection depends on route. Ice gear for the approach and for the summit. Portaledge are required for most routes.

PERMIT and VISA

A permit for climbing in Pakistan is required from the Pakistan Ministry of Tourism. (Address: Government of Pakistan, 13-T/U Commercial Area, F-7/2 Islamabad.) Permits require a minimum of 4 persons, who all must be registered at time of applying for the permit, though these names can be changed later (with difficulty). 1992 Permit cost for 6000 meter peaks: \$1000. Application for a specific peak must be received no later than October 31 of the preceding year. Changes to the permit must be finalized 4 months prior to arrival in Pakistan. The application needs to include such particulars like specific dates of arrival and departure, members including specified leader, reserve members, general size (amount of gear), particulars of travel to and from the peak, information on the peak desired (with second, third, fourth choices), and specifics (including passport info) of the leader and expedition members). A visa is also required. Obtain the visa after permit application is approved. (Address: Consulate General of Pakistan 12 East 65th Street NY NY 10021)

PRETRIP PREPARATIONS

Immunizations: Gamma Globulin (for Hepatitis A), Diphtheria-tetanus (if not current), oral Typhoid, oral Malaria recommended (none required). Check with the State Department or the U.S. Public Health Service for current international health warnings: 202-647-1488.

GETTING THERE

Fly to the Islamabad/Rawalpindi airport. Excess baggage charges vary with each airline, so check this out before committing to the cheapest flight. Also, switching carriers somewhere along the way may be cheaper but guaranteed to be a major hassle. British Airways and Pakistan International are the two international airlines to Islamabad/Rawalpindi. NOTE: Ticket price may be the same for a flight to Skardu (via Rawalpindi).

RAWALPINDI: DO NOT PASS GO. PERMITS AND PAPERS.

Once in Rawalpindi, much has to be done before a team can get to the mountains. Plan on at least 4 or 5 days in Rawalpindi. Many expeditions hire an agent in Rawalpindi, who will help with all the red-tape details, arrange for travel to Skardu and Askole, and set up a guide for the porters. An agent in Rawalpindi is a good idea to get you around the first time. Cost: \$300 and up.

1. A residence permit (available at the police station) and a "preliminary briefing" with the Minister of Tourism is required. The leader of the expedition meets with the Minister and discusses matters like insurance and equipment for the Liaison Officer, and set up a date for a formal briefing, in which all members of the expedition must participate.
2. An army officer (the Liaison Officer, or "LO") is assigned to each expedition. This fellow is usually under the impression that he will be an active climber on the trip, and must be appeased. In addition to wages, the LO must also be

outfitted with a full expedition kit, which is a big incentive for the army officers to volunteer for the expedition. A list of 25 items including new boots, a sleeping bag, tent, and full clothing is required. Some but not many of the items can be purchased in Pakistan. Details of the LO's clothing and boot sizes are sent after approval of the Permit. LO wages: \$12/day while in Rawalpindi, and \$6/day in the mountains, plus kit.

3. A cook must be hired and outfitted too. At our hotel, we had several people offer to be our cook. Letters of recommendation are helpful to look at, but view them with suspicion (our cook's letter was exposed at basecamp when we found it belonged to the cook for the Spanish team with whom we shared basecamp with; notwithstanding, our cook proved to be a fine fellow) Cost of Cook: \$6.00/day, plus food.

4. Each porter must be outfitted with three items: shoes, socks, sunglasses. The best value for these items is in Rawalpindi. Cost: approximately \$6 per porter.

5. Insurance for the porters, the cook, and the LO (all Pakistanis who will go to the mountains with you) is required and can be obtained in Rawalpindi.

6. Two major insurance bonds must be put up: one for the environment \$1000, and one for rescue, \$4000. These bonds are best set up with an insurance company in the U.S. If the camps are kept clean and no one needs a helicopter, both these bonds are returned. In addition to these bonds, a \$200 environmental non-refundable "contribution" is required.

7. Shipped items must be collected in Rawalpindi. Itemized (!) customs clearance must be shown to the Minister.

8. Bring photos for police and the Ministry of Tourism (4 total).

9. When everything is at long last copacetic, the Minister will approve the expedition at the final briefing.

SHOPPING LIST IN RAWALPINDI

- Food for basecamp.
- Kitchen for basecamp: Large kerosene stoves, lanterns, cook kit.
- Porters kit (1 ea shoes, sunglasses, pr. socks)
- Miscellaneous kit items for LO, Cook.
- Tarps for porters and for basecamp.
- Containers for 55 pound loads (as many as needed).

FOOD

Most of the basecamp food can be procured in Rawalpindi. (Certain bulk items like flour, kerosene, and cooking oil can be purchased in Skardu.) Finding the right shop in Rawalpindi can be tricky, but once found, good quality items at a good price are to be had. Examples: biscuits, rice, lentils, powdered milk, canned cheese, tang, tea, sardines, tuna, sugar, garlic, onions, potatoes, spices, noodles. For the climb, it seems best to bring most of the provisions from home, such as dried beans, powdered potatoes, dried veggies, 2-minute noodles, lots of drink mixtures (tea w/ sugar, coffee, fruit drink, cocoa, soup mixes), chocolate, candy, plain biscuits, sugar biscuits, cheese, jam, butter, chocolate, dried fruit and muesli. General Rule of Thumb: approximately 2.2 pounds (including minimal packaging) of food per person per day.

NOTE ON FOOD IN CITIES AND TOWNS

General rule: If its not hot and freshly cooked, don't eat it (no salads or anything rinsed in tap water). Wash hands before meals. Chai (sweet tea with milk) is generally safe, as well as bottled soda (make sure cap fizzes when removed). A water purifier for hotel tap water saves money on bottled water.

TRAVEL

Once all the regulations have been met in Rawalpindi, its time to move to Skardu, the capital of the Northern Territory. It's possible to go overland by bus for \$300/team. This takes over 24 hours and is exhausting but beautiful. The other way is to fly (also beautiful), for \$30/ person, plus excess baggage charges. Flying is recommended unless you desire a true cultural and wild experience.

SKARDU

Skardu is the last outpost of any size, and is a good place to buy items like flour, kerosene, and cooking oil. Most items are available, but at a higher price than in Rawalpindi. Once in Skardu, porter loads and jeeps for the ride to Askole must be arranged. The jeep road to Askole was finished just recently, and is a great boon to expeditions to the Baltoro. Our expedition required 3 jeeps (and drivers) for our 5 members, cook, LO, and 46 porter loads (2530 pounds of food and equipment). A scale is necessary equipment here, as is an abundance of containers. The 50 and 100 gallon plastic expedition barrels that most of our gear was packed in were the best. Containers of manageable sizes may be hard to find in abundance in Skardu. Having at least one good sturdy wood box for a basecamp kitchen table is nice.

ASKOLE

Askole is a tiny village with no goods available, and is the starting point of the trek in to Basecamp. The porters will be officially hired here; during the season, many porters are available in the nearby camping spot of Chango.

THE TREK

It's a three day, 50 mile trek to Trango basecamp. Cable and bridge crossings have tolls, so one member must be on hand with the kitty to pay for each porter and member at these river crossings (usually 15 rupees, or 60 cents/person). Porter wages for the 50 mile trek: \$50 each. (55 pound maximum). Basecamp location will depend on the route planned, but there are several good sites on each of the Trango and Dungee glaciers (two members may want to scout basecamp ahead of the rest of the expedition party).

BASECAMP

A comfortable basecamp is key to getting rest during the down times. Due to the long and sometimes technical approach to these climbs, several intermediate camps may be required to get to the base of the climb from basecamp. Timing for the routes is critical, due to the weather, so hanging out at a nice basecamp is critical for proper positioning. Individual member tents, as well as a well-built kitchen (stone walls are readily built, bring tarps and lots of cord). Sturdy boxes or even lawn chairs are nice items.

NOTES ON GARBAGE

Keep the mountains clean. At basecamp, keep trash in one place. When the expedition's over, let the porters take what they want, burn what will burn, and toss the ashes and the rest into a deep crevasse in the glacier (batteries and other toxic items should be carried out). We made a decision to carry out our 110 pounds of garbage (2 porter loads) at the end of the expedition. After carrying it almost all the way to Skardu, our Laison officer got tired of seeing us lug it around, and dumped it all into the Braldu River, which it was most likely destined for in any case.

EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Personal Gear: A complete set of cold weather expedition gear is needed. See Appendix B for a complete list. Communal Gear: Water purifier (for city tap water and for glacial melt), radios, shovel, spring balance for weighing loads, communal wallet for kitty, black water bags for melting snow with waterproof closure and valve, spare cord for porters, binoculars. First Aid Kits (2 separate kits needed): Full Medical kit for basecamp, and kit for the climb. Kits should include as a minimum: light pain killers, heavy pain killers, antibiotics (Septra DS, erythromycin, Cipro), Flagyl for amoebic dysentery or Giardiasis, antidiarrheals, antibacterial ointment and wound items, eye wound items, iodine for

purifying water, antihistamines, anti-inflammatories, general repair kit, and items like sunscreen and moleskin. General repair kit: knife, small sewing kit, sewing awl and thread, duct tape, cloth tape, candles, baling wire, parachute cord, crampon tools and spare parts, nylon patches. Cooking gear for the climb: Two climbing stoves: one hanging propane/butane (Markill Stormy is best) with a length of uncoated malleable copper wire for constructing a heat exchanger, and one kerosene burning stove for melting snow (the MSR XGK is unsurpassed), repair kit, and fuel bottles (up to 10 liters). Count on one gas canister or half liter of fuel per day for 2 people. In addition to Markill Stormy pots, one extra large pot with lid for melting snow.

WATER ON ROUTE

At 5000 meters above sea level, it's been noted that the body needs approx 1 gallon per day to maintain fluid levels being lost by sweating, heavy breathing, and the diuretic effect of a hypoxic environment. The requirement increases with altitude so it becomes a constant struggle to consume enough water, especially if all water must be melted from snow. Insufficient water intake affects your performance and at altitude can be a contributory factor in pulmonary or cerebral edema and thrombosis (which also increases the chance of frostbite). It requires constant vigilance to ensure proper water intake; having a wide variety of drinks to consume helps (soups, teas, fruit drinks, cocoa, etc.)

NOTES ON ALTITUDE

The summits of Great Trango and Nameless are over 20,000 feet, so Acute Mountain Sickness (altitude sickness) is definitely to be considered, although the pace of a wall route, where climbers are usually averaging less than 500 feet of altitude gain per day, acclimatization is given time. Diamox has been used widely to prevent and to reduce the symptoms of AMS. Be aware that it is a diuretic, so additional fluids must be consumed, and also that some serious side effects have been reported.

The End

Appendix A: COMPLETE LIST OF ASCENTS

Nameless Tower Ascent Year Team Route

- 1st: 1976 British new route
- 2nd: 1987 Yugoslav (Cankar, Knez, Srot) new route
- 3rd: 1987 Swiss-French (Piola et al) new route (parapente descent)
- 4th: 1988 Swiss-Polish (Kurtyka, Loretan) new route
- 5th: 1988 German (et al) Yugoslav route
- 6th: 1988 German (Gullich, Albert et al) Yugoslav route (1st free ascent)
- 7th: 1989 Spanish (Gallego et al) new route
- 8th: 1989 German (Gullich, Albert, Stiegler) new route: The Eternal Flame
- 9th: 1990 Lowe/Destiville Yugoslav route
- 10th: 1990 Japanese Solo new route
- 11th: 1992 Spanish (Lorenzo, Santiago, Pepe) Kurtyka-Loretan route
- 12th: 1992 Spanish (Pepe, Kiki) Yugoslav route
- 13th: 1992 Korean (Young Chu et al) Yugoslav route
- 14th: 1992 Child/Wilford new route

Great Trango Tower-Main Summit

(note: routes to the main summit are alpine climbs)

Ascent Year Team Route

1. 1st 1977 Rowell, Schmitz, Hennek, Roskelly West Side (alpine route)

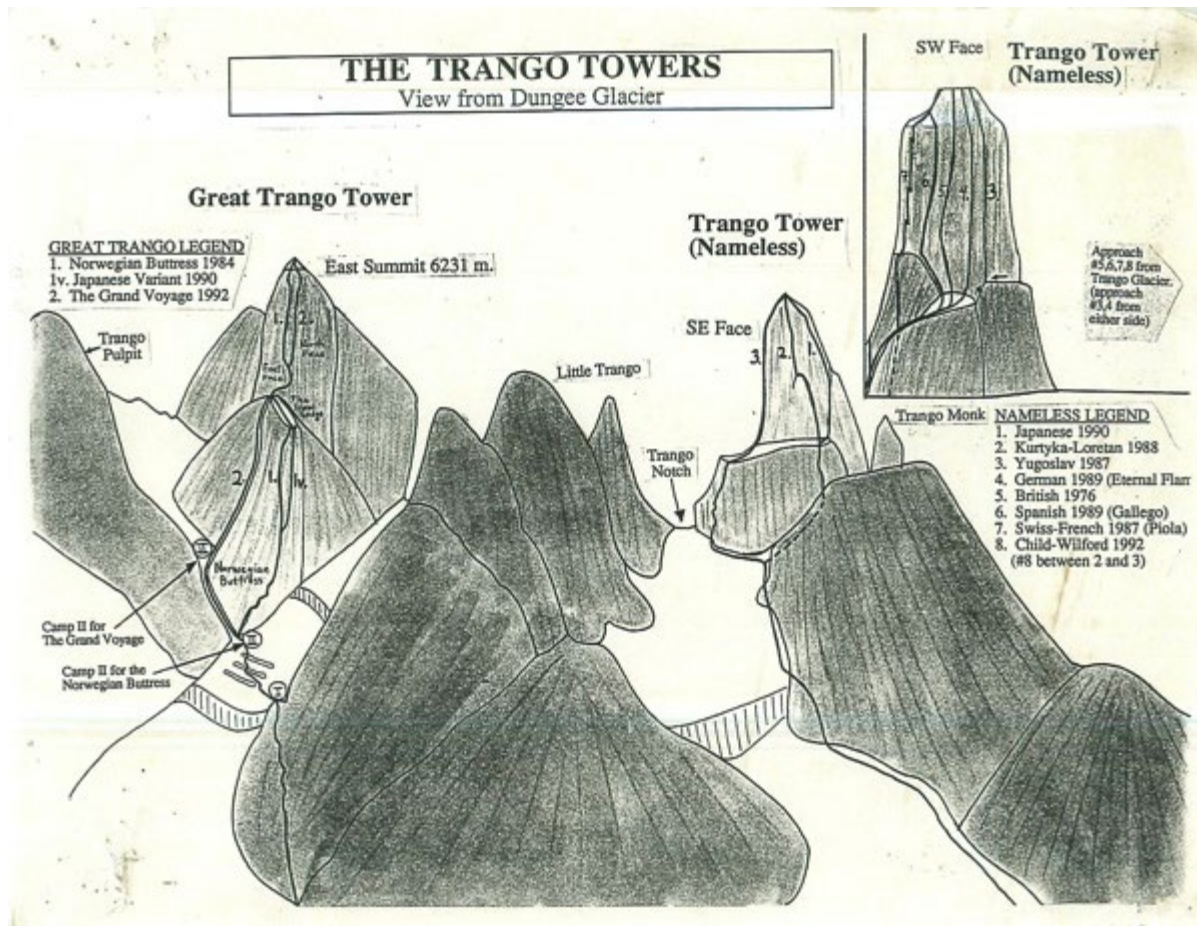
2. 2nd 19? Swiss or French team??? West Side "
3. 3rd 1985 Scott Wollums, Andy Selters NW ridge (alpine route)
4. 4th 1988 Giordani (Italian) solo NW ridge "
5. 5th (?) 1992 Australian (base-jumping team) NW ridge

Great Trango Tower-East Summit

Ascent Year Team Route

1. 1st 1984 Hans Christian Doseth, Finn Daelhi Norwegian Buttress
2. 2nd 1992 John Middendorf, Xaver Bongard [The Grand Voyage](#)

Note: the Norwegian Buttress was climbed to the rim but not the summit by both a Japanese team in 1990 and a Spanish team in 1991.



APPENDIX B: GEAR:List of personal gear

- Pile or polypro underlayer
- Pile midlayer (pile jacket, pile pants)
- Gore-tex outer layer (jacket, pants)
- Down jacket and sweater
- Hat, spare hat (nylon or Gore-tex covered), and neckwarmer
- Gore-tex covered pile gloves or mitts, and spares
- 3 prs. medium weight pile or dachstein wool gloves (for climbing)
- 3 prs. warm socks
- Plastic double boots
- Trekking boots.

- Base camp sneakers
- Climbing boots
- Helmet
- Trekking poles and brim hat.
- Clear flexible tube (1/2" ID x 4 foot length) for collecting water
- Sunglasses and spares
- Headlamp, extra bulbs and batteries, and spare mini-mag light
- One liter water bottle
- Camera, radio or tape player
- Solar charger and rechargeable batteries
- Lighters and pens of various types (some work better than others at altitude (also make great gifts for the porters)
- Personal mug and spoon
- Ice Gear: 1 each ice tool and alpine hammer, ice screws, crampons
- Bivy gear: 2 sleeping bags (one for basecamp, one for climb), bivy sack, basecamp tent, 3 insulation pads (2 for basecamp)
- Large pack and day pack
- Waterproof dry bags for personal items
- Miscellaneous: many small packets of energy type drink mix., hacky sac, baggage tags.

APPENDIX C: COST OF EXPEDITION

List for 5 people to go into the mountains. Note: this list assumes that all members are fully outfitted with climbing, camping, and personal gear. Also excludes "kit" for Liaison Officer and cook. Also excludes airfare to Rawalpindi.

Item Cost

- Permit \$1000
- Food and fuel \$2000 (mixed US/Rawalpindi costs)
- Freight \$ 800 (shipping cost of gear and food to Rawalpindi)
- Barrels \$ 400
- Agent (optional) \$ 300
- Kitchen for basecamp \$ 120
- Tarps \$ 50
- Insurance \$ 150 (for porters, guide, cook, and LO)
- Porter's gear (46 sets) \$ 270
- Transport to Skardu \$ 500 (round trip, includes freight to Skardu)
- Basecamp Cleaning \$ 200 (mandatory "contribution")
- Cook's fees(45 days) \$ 350 (food and wages)
- L.O.'s fees (45 days) \$ 400 (food and wages)
- Guide for porters \$ 120
- Jeeps to Askole \$ 270 (3 jeeps w/ drivers @ \$90 each)
- Jeeps from Askole \$ 90 (return trip to Skardu)
- Porters-approach(46) \$2300
- Porters-return (18) \$ 900
- Hotels, food, taxis \$ 350
- Misc. fees, etc. \$ 130

Total \$10,700 for 5 people = \$2140 each.

Appendix D: Reference

Maps: available from Chessler Books 1-800-654-8502

Karakoram Maps (Leomann) Sheet 2 and 3, Scale 1:200,000

Karakoram Maps (Swiss Foundation) Sheets 1 and 2, Scale 1:250,000

Mundik, Jammu and Kashmir (topographic) Scale 1:250,000



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GREAT TRANGO TOWER

BY XAVER BONGARD

All the mountaineers who pass Urdukas , a necessary step on the road to the giants- K2, Gasherbrum 1 and 2, Broad peak, are able to admire the group of Trango Towers that reigns on the other side of the immense Baltoro glacier . The faces of the Great Trango Tower and Nameless Tower stand out among the most impressive walls in the world. Since the first and tragic ascent of the pillar from the Grand Tower in 1984, by two Norwegians who died on the descent, this mythical route has been followed only twice: once by the Japanese, who had to abandon their attempt below the summit, and then by the Spanish, who went only to the rim. Without doubt, the time had come to write a new page in "The Legend of the Big Walls". It was with this goal that we, John Middendorf, Ueli Bühler, François Studenmann, Ace Kvale (the photographer), and myself decided to return to the Karakoram: an international team that had trained its gaiters under all skies. I also had the crazy determination to attempt a BASE jump from the summit!

Rawwalpindi, Skardu, Askole, then finally the Dunge Glacier: June 23, 1992, the explosive Swiss-American team, accompanied by their forty six porters installed their camp at the foot of the D'Ouevre. Now it was necessary to find the route for which we had come here- a difficult task which we immediately embarked upon.

In comparison to its neighbor, Nameless Tower, The Great Trango Tower hardly offers lines of evident weakness. Not to mention objective dangers that considerably reduce our route options, the wall sits under the direct menace of a cornice of snow. Apparently, the only route by which to embark in front was to then veer off toward the right, where we observed a large flake. John would select the route. After his impressive record of first ascents on the American Big Walls, we naturally designated him to be the leading authority and guide of the group.

The Secrets of Ali Baba.

The initial climb up the Edelweiss on the right bank of the suspended glacier is completed rapidly with three hundred meters of fixed ropes. When we had arrived at the foot of the Norwegian Pillar, dominated by a large serac, we decided to follow the base of the left wall by climbing the Ali Baba's couloir, which was often swept with avalanches. One small hitch--John and I had underestimated the dangers to which we would be exposed on this sunny slope. Never had we followed the old adage "run for your life" with such vigor! We did not intend to climb the couloir up to the top. Very rapidly, the grave dangers pushed us to enter into a noticeable cleft, The Canopy, where we discovered a place well protected by an overhang.

So, this bad weather disheartened the team stalled our progression. The snow caused avalanches that rendered the Ali Baba's pass impracticable for two days; the weather tortured our nerve endings to tempt us to find the key that would open the path to the mountain. The fifth of July: the majority of the team located on the Canopy, the highest point that we had reached, and in fact, the base of the true wall. In the course of the next three days, John and I fixed six lengths of rope, being two hundred and fifty meters total. After free- climbing the start of the route, we now had to prepare ourselves for a more technical climb. Progressing on hooks, we danced a veritable air-ballet balancing ourselves from one edge to the next. Often, we made ourselves really small underneath our helmets. With a beautiful unconsciousness, we had really discovered a route of choice.

From that moment on, the spirit of the team reached a difficult challenge, as opinions diverged on the best route to follow. Although the discussions were sometimes awkward, the three Swiss spoke only their native language. They, therefore, chose not to engage in the adventure with this group of strong personalities. For Ueli and François, the ascent became too technical and they decided to attempt a free climb on Nameless Tower. Selfishly, I felt relieved. On the other hand, I had to definitely abandon my plans to BASE jump because once we arrived at the summit, I could not let John descend by himself.

The Evil Spell of Golum

So, after a period of bad weather, we reembarked on July 13, transporting equipment to the Canopy (Camp3) and hauled our 120 kilograms of supplies to the top of pitch 5, that is to say, fifty kilograms of provisions (for twenty five days), forty litres of water, twenty cartridges of gas, three litres of gas for the stove, bivouac hammocks, plus all the gear for a "Yosemite style" big wall, and six ropes. Above Camp3 we fixed two hundred meters of rope. We made Camp 4 at the base of a corner we baptized "Golum's Gully" (Golum is an evil genie of LORD OF THE RINGS), and made a comfortable home at the base of the gully: one portaledge set up on the side. This could all seem very paradoxical, but we had reason to be very wary.

In the afternoon, as soon as the wall was in the shade, we embarked on the ascent of the wall. This attempt was quickly aborted as a cornice above us collapsed, and I emerged with a black eye and bruises all over my arms. We climbed for the next two nights, then, to reach the huge "Snowledge". Only five pitches of climbing in Golum's Gulley, but a delicate mixed climb nonetheless, and the irksome hoisting of our bags forced us to place our belays on the completely slippery left side of the corner.

When we had reached the snowledge, the curtain rose, and uncovered the Nameless Tower for us. We no longer had to be submissive to the mood swings of Golum, and we had reached the half-way mark of the climb, a very satisfying endeavor.

Following this direct line, we had reached the foot of the head wall without having to cross the long ridge of snow that connects the top of the Norwegian Pillar with the headwall, which is not flat but a long sloping ridge of snow three hundred meters long. Here, we were able to make our only unsuspended bivouac of the whole climb by digging a flat area. The snow also provided us with the water necessary for the second part of the climb.

The beginning of the wall was so thin that rurs, copperheads, and other cliff hangers were rendered useless. We had to borrow the Norwegians' pillar route for four pitches. After a fantastic pitch of 6b (5.11), we veered off the Norwegian route to the right only to find delicate seams that were undoubtedly the hardest part of the climb.

On that day, suffering from a stomach flu, John had to descend back down to the Snowledge. Once again, I found myself alone. So, peacefully I sampled a superb technical pitch. The next day, John still had not recuperated and I spent the day lugging the 50 litre water containers to the highest point, pitch 19.

Cold Sweats

On July 21, we hauled the rest of our gear to this last belay. John, who was undoubtedly trying to catch up, climbed several pitches in a row, hauling each pitch as he went- a coup d'eclat that makes you feel your weight. After the 18th pitch, it became possible to free climb; however, for reasons of speed and convenience, we continued to climb with the etriers most of the time. Certain pitches started in aid, and instead of changing for a free climb, it was more rational to not change materials mid-pitch.

Then the cracks started to get wider and wider, so we really did not have any choice, except to proceed by free climbing. After a systematic probing of the rack, we realized that we had left our big cams with Ueli and François. This was an unfortunate error that cost us a lot of effort and futile cold sweats as we struggled up the chimney pitches.

The twenty third pitch was now behind us. Instead of using the aid, I slipped up a narrow chimney. John, who was larger than I, had no chance of fitting through there. When I hauled the haulbags, I had to squeeze back into the chimney, and had remove my helmet which was too big to fit through. John followed the climb on the exterior. I was resting from this difficult effort, when I saw him fall and swing in an impressive pendular motion. He screamed and looked at his bloody hand. Shit, he lost a finger! I expected the worst, fortunately, when I looked more closely, it was only a superficial wound. This incident sent me into disturbing thoughts. What could have just happened? At first glance I saw that a flake above me that was part of the belay had detached under the pressure of a friend, and we had fallen underneath. 20 meters below, the flake had just missed John's ear. I had just taken my helmet off at that moment, but we had come out of it smelling like roses. We set up Camp Seven in the chimney, protected from all that could come from

above.

A succession of chimneys and bad weather complicated our lives. Most of the time, the beginnings of the days were beautiful, but by afternoon it would either start to rain or snow. We did not let ourselves be beaten, however, and kept climbing until we were both soaked from head to toe and one of us took the initiative to return to the sanctuary of the portaledge. We then understood the meteorological cycle of the Baltoro: with a certain regularity, three days of good weather alternated with three days of bad weather.

The sight of a wall capped in snow and ice made our imaginations run wild, so that even the smallest tumbling of snow from above was met with great anxiety. Although, now, in the upper part, this detail lost little of its importance. One night at Camp 7, though, it started to snow, and all night until dawn, I had to clear off the snow that accumulated on our portaledge. John, plunged into a deep sleep, didn't even notice. This precipitation, however, had the noteworthy advantage of filling up our water barrel, replenishing our water supply.

In three days, we had not advanced more than a pitch and a half. Then, on July 26, the sun came back out illuminating the smooth summit wall, streaked with smooth grooves a meter wide, carved by erosion. Infatigable, John literally and rhythmically wormed a path through these wormholes. At the belay, I traded my fur climbing shoes for completely frozen plastic overboots. It was impossible to warm up in these conditions! I had them off for some superficial freezing (Frostbite?). Then the temperature generally rose to such a point that we were rarely had to wear gloves to climb.

The Snares of Trango

Another pitch, short and easy, we reached the rim and the rock pillar was behind us. What a relief. In a few rappels, we had rejoined our last platform, "The Yellow Submarine", which we had dubbed our portaledge home at Camp 7.

The next day, when we had equipped ourselves for the final glacial climb from the rim to the summit, cries reached us from Nameless Tower. But this time it had nothing to do with the usual cries of joy of our companions. At the same time on the radio, I caught, "Shit, I broke my leg!" What could we do now? The situation was dramatic, but not critical. After having discussed it on the radio with Ace, staying down below, we concluded that their descent would take several days and that the two hours more or less (that is to say, the time that it would take to reach the summit) would not make that big of a difference. Ace left immediately for Paju, the closest military base, in order to get help and to get a helicopter to pick up our partners back at the base camp (in Pakistan, helicopters do not go any higher). Ueli and Francois had to allow two days to descend by their own means.

Still in shock over this accident, I climbed the last snow and ice covered pitches that lead to the summit with mixed feelings. This varied terrain offered an ascent that was complicated, and the difficulty of which I underestimated. At several reprises, I was literally swallowed up to my chest by snow, to such a point that I began to question if I would ever arrive at the summit. The deep snow training that I had in the Cordillera Blanca turned out to be quite beneficial. By instinct, I opened up a path to the summit like the Norwegians had done eight years ago: I discovered several of their belays on the way. To meet up with the ridge of the summit, and to find a solid layer, I had to dig in the snow like a mole. As soon as I started to seriously doubt our chances of success, I suddenly found myself sitting on the summit like the blade of a knife, hidden under a deep layer of snow. A final act of bravery!

SUMMIT!

Sixteenth day, right before sunset, the summit of the Grand Tower of Trango is 6,231 meters. A dream became reality. John comes. An emotional moment. We hugged each other. "Good job fucker !" We engrave the fantastic panorama into our memories. Later, we will have all the time to marvel at it. For the moment, it is time to leave as the sun will disappear in a half of an hour.

An hour after nightfall, we had reached the top of the wall and three hours later we reached shelter in our little titanium house. The next day we let our heaviest gear go. The water container exploded against the wall after falling a few meters. With this, my base jump project had no chance of success, and I could descend with a peaceful conscience.

We allowed forty eight hours to return to the Canopy, at the beginning of the wall. It was so hot during those last two days that Ali Baba' Couloir had become pretty dangerous, even at night. After hesitating for a while, we crossed the wall at dawn and rappelled down the rock slab on the other side. The base of the wall was approaching. In the course of the climb, you feel strong, invincible, and ready to face any dangers, then during the descent, courage abandons you.

The last rappels, crevasses, objective risks, crampon problems, slides; then the last danger was behind us. After forty four interminable rappels, we had finally reached the cows' floor, the good old Dunge glacier. Finally, we relished in the security that we had so desired from the top, liberated from the prison that we had voluntarily locked ourselves in.

The next day we left in search of the rest of our gear. One of our sacks had fallen from the cornice and had rolled to the moraine. Normally, Ace would have been able to help us by indicating where our gear was, but he was busy with the rescue of our companions. We easily located the blue water container as well as the foam mattress. I ventured in the direction of our gear only to quickly turn back, too afraid of the real danger that the cornice would collapse. As for John, he could not find his ski poles. They had been buried by rockfall that had occurred while we were on route. Once again, the mountain had slammed the door in our noses. The Grand Tower spoke, "Hey little man, go away!. You have pierced me with dozens of holes, you've changed me enough. Leave me alone so that I can regain my strength and create icy avalanches that are better and more fantastic than those that I have given you this year. INCH Alla!"



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Anguish and Relief on the Big Stone

By Xaver Bongard.

First Solo Ascent of Lost in America, A5, 5.10, 9 days in 1987 .

Here I am, suspended from my sky-hook, ten yards from the Lost in America ledge. Two things hold my life: a bit of rope, and two worthless pitons anchored into a mere quarter inch of rock. At this precise moment, it's not the fall I fear. Rather, I have the feeling of being lost and forgotten on this breathtaking rock face 1200 feet above the ground. The more I draw near the end of the pitch, the more cautious I become. It would be sad irony to have a mishap so close to the end, to be thrown from the face only to end up back at the previous belay. If that were to happen, I don't see how I could get myself together again and find the courage to continue. I have no other alternatives; there is but one way out of this predicament and it lies directly above me. To contemplate a retreat from this, one of the most overhanging of faces...best not to even think about it. As well, it's no use expecting any help from any of my three climbing "companions". One of them inundates my ears at 45 minute intervals with music. The two others, my indispensable haulbag and porta-ledge, are but silent mutes offering no advice whatsoever. Enough complaining, let us return to my problem. Thirty feet still lie between me and the ledge. The bottom line is that I really don't know what to do. I actually have two choices: a short climb directly above me, or a longer one which would take me around to the right. Which way did the last guy pass? The situation is getting comical. I cannot arrive at a decision while hanging here quietly suspended from a hook whose hold could give at any moment. Silently I ask myself, "Where would my body end up if the hook did give way?" I finally decide to move, and my efforts find success once again. As my progress becomes evident, I find myself reassured of what is commonly said: when climbing A4 or harder, one no longer falls. But even for the expert, this maxim only holds true if your energies are fully concentrated on success. After several days on this monstrous rock wall, I am beginning to experience strange sensations: my mind is slowly becoming frozen by the constant state of concentration and anguish to which it is subjected. The anguish of wanting to give up but feeling a need to continue. Anguish always present, like talking to someone non-stop fifteen hours a day, every day, for more than a week. No wonder then that my senses are playing tricks on me. I feel as though invariably my pitons are coming loose, pulling out of the fissures, while actually they could easily support twice my weight. My reasoning tells me that everything is under control, but what can I do? I can't shake the doubts and frustrations from my over-anxious mind. I suppose it's best to just accept fate and try to get used to it--if I fall I fall. I have the distinct impression of being "cooked", as it is commonly said around here. At this stage I could decidedly go for a good rest, to lie down on my porta-ledge with a bit of gorp and warm beer. But it's not yet time. The only solution to getting me out of this predicament is to get hold of a good piton, like the one protruding 45 feet above me at the next belay. The 15 Knifeblades required to reach it don't really inspire a lot of confidence. I could certainly pull out my bolt-kit and drill. That would certainly get me out of this mess. But that would be the easy way out, the defeat of the whole purpose of being here. I won't give up so easily, so quickly, even if the devil himself appeared and offered to drill for me. It is time to test one's fortitude, to prove that I can finish what I started. This adventure of mine seems like a funny game filled with doubts and joys, a game filled with moments of anxiety and fear, but rarely fatal. Sensations accentuated by the fact that you are alone, you are your only partner; no one else can share your fears at the moment you grin at the face of death and pass it by. This game at times seems as dangerous as heroin; addicting and life-threatening. To take part, you must truly be motivated with the impetus it takes to uproot trees, to channel all your energy and concentration on accomplishing a mammoth task few will even attempt. Without that dedication of force, it would be highly inexpedient to pursue a solo on the "big stone". The first slip could be your last. I have described the situation from the physical perspective, from the mental aspect it is quite a different story. For me, the most difficult time is the evening before the climb. I feel relieved at having finished the arduous task of preparation. Then the doubts arise, penetrating every thought. The last time, before setting up on this climb, the doubts were so intense I almost changed my mind.



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This is the obituary I wrote for Xaver Bongard

XAVER BONGARD OBITUARY

Xaver Bongard died in the evening on April 15, 1994 while jumping his favorite cliff, Staubbach, a 300 meter BASE jump near his home town of Interlaken. Both his main and reserve parachutes failed.

It is hard to describe Xaver in words. On first impressions he seemed borderline insane, always with an extreme project/event brewing, and telling of it with a fiery glint in his eye.

Imaginative, with people and the way he lived life, Xaver lived each moment in sync with his surroundings, modest and at ease with everyone. You could count on Xaver to be the life of the party. On the other hand it was impossible to predict Xaver. After Xaver and I spent 5 days on the Swiss-American route in Zion, he ran over to our unsuspecting female hiking friends on the top of Angel's Landing with a "Hello babies" and a big kiss. When he and I ascended our fixed line on the Cyclops's Eye, a 100 foot roof on El Cap, he cut loose from the belay unannounced, swung 150 feet out from the wall, and became a tangled mess with the haul line. He always displayed the same unpredictability with his conversation too, which was always positive and usually funny. One thing you could always count on, however, was Xaver's unfailing adherence to paying respects before sharing a drink with a friend with a "Proust!"

Xaver always inspired.

When I first met Xaver in Yosemite, he getting gearing for El Cap solo ascents. He began his Yosemite climbs with one-day ascents of the Salathe and the Nose. Then he jumped right in with the hardest nailing routes. After he soloed Lost in America, he pegged me as knowledgeable on the walls of Yosemite, and asked, "I want to solo the hardest route on El Cap. Which one is it, do you think?" That year he soloed The Sea of Dreams. I met him again the next year, he was back for more action on El Cap. He asked, "What is the hardest now?" I suggested Jolly Roger and he was off. The third year I got to know Xaver, in 1989, he was planning a solo of the Wyoming Sheep Ranch. After fixing a few pitches, he decided he was tired of soloing and invited me for his ascent. I learned a lot from our first climb together. We had totally different methods, Xaver with always the strangest self-taught and ingenious systems for dealing with big wall organizational hell. Somehow, our systems complimented rather than collided.

While traveling in his orange Monte Carlomobile throughout the climbing areas in the US one year, Xaver once sent homemade cards to all his friends back in Europe. It was a xeroxed folded sheet, with the words, "Wot does a man need to be happy in life?" with drawings of shoes and rope, a parachute, a bottle of beer, and a big heart with "love and sex", and finished with "Greeting from Amerika" with a scrawled letter about his adventures inside. The card typifies Xaver's pure happiness with his passions.

Xaver had his dark side, in which his jokes about death often uncovered a glimpse of. In Rawalpindi before our expedition to the Karakoram, he stopped in a gravestone shop and picked his favorite. In a video he and Will Oxx made about their jumps in Switzerland, Xaver marked out some spots in the snowy graveyard which doubled as their landing zone, and said to Will, "Will, I get a reservation here for you. I like this one. What do you want, with a view of Staubbach, what could be better?" He knew exactly what he was doing. Climbing and jumping were his passions, and he took them both to the extreme. Proud yet without pride, he would fearlessly go for it whenever the opportunity arose.

Xaver was a machinist by trade. He only recently finished his UIAA guides training at age 29, and was making a living from climbing: guiding, writing about expeditions, and making films. But BASE jumping became his main passion. He wrote to me recently, "In January I did a little guiding jobs. I only did a few iceclimbing. The season was not very good. I was more interested in being a jumping Mother fucker! I jumpt 10 new spots. Very steep stuff. I'm waiting for a visit of you to drop you off the STAUBBACH, the steepest cliff in town." I think, by jumping off cliffs, Xaver tested his own immortality while getting the added bonus of adrenaline..

With Xaver's death, I think of others who were close: my sister, Kevin Dippy, Ted Johnson, Derek Hersey, Mugs Stump, who have all died doing the thing they each loved the most, and I think of my friends who still live, who also test their limits of immortality, and hope I we can remember that living the extreme may eventually meet with inescapable death, and not forget what a loss death is.

Xaver is survived by his girlfriend Annabelle, and family.

Xaver, we hope you are in a better place, climbing and jumping the walls of your dreams. But we will miss you here.

[Heroes](#)

Yosemite Walls

By no means is the following a complete list of quality Yosemite walls; it is merely a selection of well-known walls broken down by category. Of course, fine big-wall adventures can be had off the beaten path--discover them for yourself. The hard routes listed here really are hard; attempting these without the proper experience is not only dangerous, but invariably means that bolts will be added. Moderate routes require a fair amount of experience, and the all-clean and trade routes merely require tenacity and good judgement.

Getting started--short practice aid routes:

1. Direct South Face, Rixon's Pinnacle
2. The Stigma
3. Bishop's Terrace (roof)
4. The Folly, Left Side

All Clean, or nearly all clean routes:

- South Face, Washington's Column V, 5.9, A2
- The Prow V, 5.9, A2+
- Leaning Tower (A2)
- Lost Arrow Spire, Direct V, 5.10, A2
- Half Dome, Regular Route VI, 5.9, A1
- The Nose VI, 5.10, A2 [Click here for the Nose-in-a-Day Beta](#)
- Salathe; VI, 5.10, A2

Current Trade Routes:

- Lurking Fear VI, 5.9, A2
- The Shield VI, 5.8, A2+
- Mescalito VI, 5.9, A3
- Tangerine Trip VI, 5.9 A3
- Zodiac VI, 5.9, A2+

Moderate Nailing Routes:

- Never-Never-Land VI, 5.10, A3
- Cosmos VI, 5.9, A3+
- Magic Mushroom VI, 5.9, A3+
- North American Wall VI, 5.8, A3
- Pacific Ocean Wall VI, 5.9, A3+
- Tis-sa-ack VI, 5.10, A3
- Liberty Cap, SW Face (Werner's Woot) VI, 5.10, A3+
- South Face of Half Dome VI, 5.9, A2+
- Tribal Rite, El Cap VI, 5.10, A3+
- [Flight of the Albatross, VI 5.10, A3+](#)



Hard Nailing Routes:

- Iron Hawk VI, 5.10, A4
- Zenyatta Mendatta VI, 5.9, A4
- Jolly Rodger VI, 5.11, A5
- Sea of Dreams VI, 5.10, A5
- Sheep Ranch VI, 5.10, A5
- Atlantic Ocean Wall VI, 5.10, A4
- Native Son VI, 5.10, A4
- The Kali-Yuga (Half Dome) VI, 5.10, A4



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YOSAR: Ghouls or Heroes?

In 1996, the same year information was compiled for an article in a magazine which portrayed Yosemite's Search and Rescue team as morbid ghouls who amuse themselves by abusing the dead, members of YOSAR were having a busy summer. Many had been called out for over 50 technical rescues and carry-outs. Despite their hopes for a quiet fall, the call-outs continued. One was considered so routine that John Dill, biographer of over 25 years of Yosemite's rescues and one of the experts of the world in safe vertical rescue techniques, didn't even bother to write it up for Accidents in North American Mountaineering, the annual report given to analyzing the unsafe events of the year. Late in the day on November 10, a climber, Jason Gilbert, made it down to the road and notified the authorities that his partner, Annabel Raab, was stranded several thousand feet above the Valley floor on the Leaning Tower chimney. A huge rock had been pulled down by their ropes after a rappel and had badly shattered her leg. The rescue team immediately mobilized. At 6:19pm, only an hour after the call came in, the first SAR wagon left the Rescue Cache with the lead team equipment and six of the most experienced members.

After approaching the base of the Tower, Werner Braun and Scott Stowe climbed in the darkness up the chimney, and arrived at the patient by 8:10pm; remarkably fast climbing time considering the terrain even in the best of conditions. Ranger-Paramedic Keith Lober and others followed, ascending the ropes left by the lead team. More teams were dispatched to bring up additional equipment, and throughout the night, anchors were placed, ropes were methodically fixed, and plans and backup plans were made for stabilizing the patient and lowering her to safety. Rock fall danger was high but all were careful, and minor snafus like running out of headlamp bulbs and ascending devices were dealt with promptly by the support teams, with Scott Burke and Dave Mathews transporting additional equipment and a foldable litter from the car to the site of the accident in record times. Even before Keith Lober stabilized the fracture, Annabel Raab's screams were heard all the way to the parking lot far below, and by 9:06pm Lober was granted permission to administer morphine by the doctors in the Yosemite Medical Clinic. Shortly thereafter, the lowering began.

By 1:45am, Keith Lober and the patient, who despite increased morphine dosages screamed incessantly from fear and pain, were finally lowered the last rope length to the base of the chimney. From there to the road lay a long, steep and loose talus/boulder field, which required endless running belays. The rescue team leapfrogged belay and lowering teams on the taxing talus descent. "It was slow and hard work" says Evan Jones, chief ranger in charge of Search and Rescue. In the wee hours of the morning, at around 3:30am, taxed after the all night venue, the litter carrying teams made it to a clearing where it was decided that a helicopter could come into and pick the patient up. But the helicopter would not be able to be sent out until dawn, and since it is a policy for YOSAR to never depend on any future mechanical assists for anything possible by manual labor, the team continued down, and three grueling hours later, by daybreak, made it down to the road.

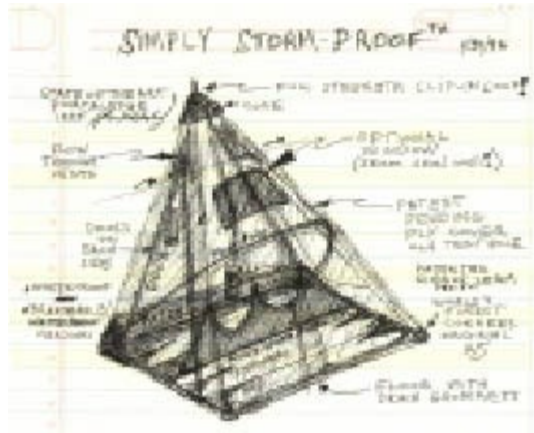
Over 25 people participated in the rescue, a model of teamwork and efficiency. Considering the terrain and danger involved, it required all the skills of what is most likely the best vertical rescue team in the world. Why do they do it? Not for the money: of the 15 climbers who risked their lives all night in the effort, none made much for their efforts, with Werner Braun receiving the most at \$286.69 for 24 hours of work on the Raab SAR. They do it because they are passionate, concerned individuals who love living the outdoor life and have developed and honed a unique set of skills. Their expertise in helping to save others comes from that passion.

For the heroic lifestyle they have chosen, the Yosemite Search and Rescue team deserves a better portrayal than the one given them by the press. Why didn't we see more tales of their true craft? The fact that they, as a team, can extract someone from such a perilous place to safety in less than 12 hours is astonishing, and that's the real story. One would think that a magazine given to represent climbing interests would be aware of the greater depth of such full-time climbers, and to fairly portray their lives, instead of the irresponsible one-sided sensational garbage that we were forced to eat.

John Middendorf

bigwalls.net

A5 in 1996:



[1996 A5 Catalog \(850K .pdf file\)](#)

The assets of A5 Adventures, Inc. were sold in 1997.

A5 in 2003:



[RETURN TO Bigwalls.net](#)

ZION GENERAL INFO

Eons of time and the elements of nature have worked hand in hand in what is now known as Zion National Park to create some of the most awesome series of canyons and formations in the world.

Legendary tales of loose rock, tenuous protection, epic descents, inhospitable climates, poisonous flora and fauna, and wicked vertical bushwhacking keep most climbers from visiting Zion's sandstone cliffs. The tales are all true. But for those interested in true adventure, Zion provides, being host to many steep big walls, ranging from 600 feet to 2200 feet, located along the Virgin River canyon and its drainages. Except for a few "trade routes" (like Moonlight Buttress and Touchstone Wall), there are no easy routes in the park: all the climbs listed here have potentially dangerous sections and require considerable experience with gear placement and route finding. The approach and descent of many routes are serious undertakings in their own right. Zion is an alpine area where objective hazards such as loose rock can be hazardous to the inexperienced and ill-prepared! Rescues from the top of inaccessible summits on sloping and possibly wet sandstone slabs are unthinkable propositions--do not expect a safe ride back to the ground ever.



Navajo Sandstone Warnings

The rock is sedimentary Navajo sandstone of many layers, each layer generally recognizable by its color, and varying widely in terms of looseness, softness, and climbability. Navajo sandstone is soft and unpredictable: loose blocks teeter in cracks and on ledges, and flakes can break off at any time. A storm may be more serious than the wretched cold indicates and safe anchors may be impossible to place: when the rock gets wet it loses 2/3 of its strength, as can be readily verified by taking a loaf-of-bread sized piece: dump it in the river for a few seconds and crack it open: You will see that even with a quick dunking, the block will be mostly saturated and will crumble easily. Drilling a clean hole in wet sandstone becomes a joke.

LOCATION

Zion National Park is located near the sleepy town of Springdale, Utah, in the southwestern corner of the state. It is a 3 hour drive from Las Vegas, Nevada, and a 4 hour drive from Salt Lake City, Utah.

[MAP of southwest Utah](#) and [MAP of Zion National Park](#),

(maps courtesy Greg Opland)

DETAILS

Zion is a National Park with its own rules and regulation system. It is up to the climbers to maintain good relations with the rangers to ensure future climbing in this beautiful area. Permits from the park service are required for any ascent requiring more than a day; request a backcountry permit with exact details of the planned ascent at the Visitor's Center. The Visitor Center is also home to the Zion Climbing Guidebooks, two volumes of semi-organized notes, comments, topos, and route information on most of the established routes in Zion.

[Click Here to read about the history of Zion.](#)

Good camping is found at the National Park Campgrounds, located inside the park, and at private campgrounds in Springdale, which have showers available for two dollars. Water for filling water bottles is available at the Zion Lodge, in Zion canyon. Food is available in Springdale, but for major shopping, it is economical to go to a major supermarket in St. George or Cedar City (about a one hour drive). The Bit and Spur in Springdale, known nationally for its fine Mexican food, is a most excellent spot to drink and feast before and after a good wall ascent.

The weather in Zion goes to extremes. Average summertime temperatures (June through August) exceed 100 degrees, and from November through December, the average lows are below freezing. Winter ascents are possible, but beware of the serious immobility that snow-covered sandstone presents to the vertical adventurer. The best seasons are the spring and fall, the fall possibly preferred. In late fall, the North Face of Angel's Landing sees very little sun during the day. After a thunderstorm it is good policy not to climb on the rock for a few days, as wet sandstone is very fragile.

Closures

Most of the park is closed to climbing from January 1 to August 1 for Peregrine protection. A few areas remain open, most notably the Temple of Sinawava in the upper canyon. There are six known nesting pairs of birds in the main canyon of the Zion sighted in the last few years. The six nesting pairs each year pick their sites on different cliffs from year to year and as a consequence, 12 areas have been closed each year for the past three years--roughly 80% of the climbing areas. The closure is posted sometime in the spring and continues to the end of fledgling season (mid August in 1994) as determined by a NPS wildlife specialist. A closure may be in effect for many of the cliffs, so check with the Visitor's Center about the current peregrine nesting sites before climbing.

National Park Permits

All overnight climbs must be registered with the Park Service with a backcountry permit. Permits are available at the Visitor's Center (only open in the day). Zion is a National Park with federal laws: it is up to the climbers to maintain good relations with the rangers to ensure future climbing in this beautiful area. The Visitor Center is also home to the Zion Climbing Guidebooks, two volumes of semi-organized notes, comments, topos, and route information. For more information, contact: Superintendent, Zion National Park, Springdale, UT 84767; or call 801-772-3256.

Environmental Concerns

Zion is a very well preserved wilderness area and climbers need to be aware of the impact humans have on the fragile desert landscape. Pack all trash up the route, and use a container to carry human waste off the route: **DO NOT TOSS BAGS OF SHIT OFF CLIMBS!** Besides garbage, be aware of trail impact and take care to follow but not trample existing paths: the plant life in Zion is incredibly fragile and takes years and years to recover from a single thoughtless passage of humans.

ZION IS A FRAGILE AREA AND MAXIMUM ATTENTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT MUST BE OBSERVED FOR CLIMBERS TO CONTINUE TO ENJOY THE AREA IN THE FUTURE.

Climbing Ethics

Be aware of rock damage: place clean gear whenever possible, and when on the nailing routes, be aware that the rock often scars from careless or poor pitoncraft. Be respectful of the established challenge of the routes without having to alter them. Zion has had some manufactured ascents; unfortunately, these have the most obvious scars of human passage. If no clean placement is available, then it is helpful to clean the piton in a manner that will create clean placements in the future ([Click here to read how](#)). Generally this will happen naturally before the placement gets "beaten out". Be wary of any new terrain until you are familiar with the rock and general difficulty of the established routes. Be prepared for very high nailing standards on the harder routes, the ratings used are subjective and are generally given modest ratings compared to the equivalent difficulty of a climb on granite.

Camping and general Provisions

Camping is available at the Watchman and South Campgrounds, located inside the park, and at a private campground in Springdale, which has showers available. Springdale is host to several markets and a liquor store. Water for filling water bottles is available at the Zion Lodge in the main canyon. Several hotels and motels are located in Springdale, as well as an ATM machine.

Favorite Local Hangs

Breakfast: Pioneer Restaurant, Springdale

Lunch: The Pizza Noodle, Springdale

Dinner: The Bit and Spur, Springdale

The Bit and Spur in Springdale offers fine Mexican food, and is an excellent spot to drink and feast before and after climbs in Zion.

Shorter routes

Many climbers come here under the misimpression that it is possible to get started on sandstone climbing on the shorter crags in the area and find that there are no "trainer routes" in Zion. The rock does not lend itself well to straightforward routes, and even on the easiest climbs, experience and knowledge are needed in order to set up a safe anchor. The good shorter climbs start at 5.10 , while "easier" routes (5.8 and 5.9) often represent loose chimneys. The rock also does not lend itself to bolted face climbs; between cracks, the sandstone is generally flawless. There are several cragging areas do exist in the park (most notably at the base of Touchstone Wall), but these areas unfortunately have the highest climber impact. The NPS is currently discouraging use in a few areas, hoping as we all should that such places remain in pristine condition. Increased tourism in general has jeopardized these areas and climbers should do their part to alleviate the problem and avoid trampling new areas. The best cragging around is in the nearby Snow Canyon which offers excellent routes (guidebook available at Desert Rock Sports in St. George).

General Equipment concerns

A standard Zion free climbing rack consists of 2 or 3 sets of cams, hexes, and stoppers, plus a load of full length slings and biners. Many routes require wide crack protection, such as the Black Diamond #5 Camalot, as well as an assortment of Bigbros, tube chocks, Tricams, and/or large hexes. The trade routes and many of the free routes do not require either pitons or a bolt kit. Be prepared for very high standards on Zion routes, the ratings used are subjective and are particular to the area. Zion routes are generally given modest ratings compared to the equivalent difficulty of a climb on granite.

Nailing routes may require a bolt kit. A 3/8 " or 1/2" hand drill with 3 1/2" (or longer) bolts and hangers constitutes an anchor kit. Rawlbolts are considered the best bolts. A standard nailing rack consists of 3 or more sets of cams, loads of stoppers and brass-nuts, biners, slings, hooks, plus 3 or 4 birdbeaks, 3 to 5 knifeblades, 3 to 5 horizontals (Lost Arrows), 2 to 3 each baby angles (1/2" and 5/8"), and 1-2 each of the bigger pitons. Routes that require more nailing gear are noted below. Offwidth gear can mean several large pieces. Check the route carefully from the ground to make final rack selections. Trust your judgement and realize that route information is only an guideline to one's choice of route and rack and varies depending on individual preference.

ROUTE INFO

Notes on routes included in this mini-guide:

Selection was based on the overall classic potential the route has, and is purely a subjective list. Many more routes exist in the park.

Routes in the Temple of Sinawava

The Temple of Sinawava is the end of Zion main canyon before it enters the Narrows. Note on river crossings: the routes on the west side in the Temple of Sinawava require crossing the river to approach. In high spring river levels, this can be difficult if not downright impossible in many spots. Check all the options and look for established paths.

Lunar Ecstasy

FA: Brad Quinn and Linus Platt, 1992

Rack: Standard Nailing rack, extra Lost Arrows and 1/2" baby angles.

Lunar Ecstasy is the crack system left of Moonlight Buttress. Climb the first pitch of Moonlight Buttress or start left in a loose 5.10 loose corner.

Descent: Angel's Landing Trail

Moonlight Buttress 5.13 or 5.9 C1

FA: Jeff Lowe and Mike Weis, 1971

FFA: Johnny Woodward and Peter Croft, 1992

Grade IV 5.13, or 5.9, C1

Rack: Standard free rack, extra TCU's.

THE classic of Zion, often done in a day. Must be one of the best free climbs of the world. Approach from a pullout on the other side of the river. Moonlight Buttress is the obvious buttress standing proud on the west side of the Temple of Sinawava. The route starts down and left of the Buttress. Scramble up 3rd class ledges to get to the base of the roped climbing.

Descent: Angel's Landing Trail.

Swoop Gimp (or be dust)

FA: Barry Ward and Alan Humphrey, 1992

Grade VI, 5.9, A2+

Rack: Standard Nailing Rack, extra beaks and blades.

Park at a pullout 1/2 mile from the end of the canyon opposite the Leaning Wall (Spaceshot). On a smooth wall several buttresses to the right of Moonlight Buttress, a right leaning ramp leads to indistinct thin cracks. Upper part of the route reportedly has poor hauling.

Descent: Angel's Landing Trail.

Monkeyfinger

FA Ron Olevsky and Rob Schnelker, 1978

FFA: Drew Bedford, 1984

Grade III, 5.12

The sweeping corner 50 meters from the last bend in the road before the Temple of Sinawava parking lot. Often done as a 5.10 A1 route.

Descent: Rappel the route.

Desert Shield

Grade V, 5.11 A3

Rack: Standard nailing rack, bathooks.

This route climbs the overhanging buttress to the right of the Leaning Wall Buttress. Park in the Leaning Wall pullout.

Descent: Rappel the route.

Touchstone Wall

FA: Ron Olevsky, 1977

Grade III, 5.10 A1

Rack: Standard free rack, extra carabiners.

Located on the Cerberus Gendarme, the tower that presides over the Angel's Landing parking lot. An obvious bolt ladder marks the start. Good cragging can be found on the walls left of Touchstone.

Descent: Continue to the true summit, then descend north to the notch on the right of the Cerberus Gendarme. Several rappels down the gully takes one back to the canyon floor.

Routes on THE EAST TEMPLE

East Temple routes can be approached from the bridge at the bottom of the tunnel switchbacks.

Lovelace

FA: Dave Jones and Gary Grey, 1983.

Grade IV or V, 5.10, C2+ (one pitch of C2+, some A0 on upper pitches).

Lovelace follows the soaring crack system directly behind the Fang Spire. From the bridge at the bottom of the switchbacks, hike up to the base on the left side of the Fang Spire. Reportedly excellent crack climbing.

Rack: Standard free rack, extra small wires and offwidth protection.

Descent: rappel the route.

The Fang Spire

FA: Kyle Copeland and John Middendorf, 1988

Grade IV or V, 5.10, A3+

This is the obvious 650 foot white-capped spire seen from the tunnel switchbacks. Route ascends thin cracks on the outside face of the spire and continues above a very large roof seen on the south side. Excellent hooking and location.

Rack: Standard Zion nailing rack, hooks.

Descent: Rappel the route.

Cowboy Bob goes to Zion

FA Hugh O'Neill, Dave Jones, 1986

Grade IV or V 5.10+ C2+ (5 moves aid reported).

Cowboy Bob Goes to Zion climbs the leftmost of the three Towers of Fate that form the southern side of the East Temple . The route begins 100 feet below the highest point on the scree slope approach, and continues up right of an white finger pillar about 1/3 the way up the wall. This route has a bold unprotected 5.10+ section at the top.

Rack: Standard free rack, offwidth gear.

Descent: 2 rappels down the ridge to the right, then 4 down a gulley to top of the scree slope. All natural anchors on the descent. There are no fixed anchors on the route itself.

Uncertain Fates

FA: Stacy Allison, Dave Jones 1986

Grade IV or V, 5.11a, C1 (5 moves aid reported)

Uncertain Fates ascends cracks just right of center on the middle Tower of Fate. Begin in left hand cracks in an obvious recessed slot at the

base.

Rack: Standard Free Rack.

Descent: Hike west, staying high along the ridge to the Great Arch overlook at the end of Pine Creek Canyon.

Freezer Burn

FA: Dave Jones and Stacy Allison, 1985

FFA: ("Free or Burn") Mugs Stump and Wheels, 1991.

Grade IV, 5.11+

This route climbs to the right of Uncertain Fates in a beautiful straight-in crack system with a small bush visible low down. A more obvious crack system is see just left of this route. Begin in a sandy alcove between the two rightmost Tower of Fates.

Rack: Standard free rack, with 4: #3 cams, and 3: #3.5 cams.

Descent: same as for Uncertain Fates

Routes in the MIDDLE CANYON-WEST SIDE

The Sentinel -Birdbeak Spire

FA: Will Oxx and John Middendorf, 1993

Grade IV, 5.10, A2

Approach: This route climbs the outer face of the 800 foot detached spire on the East Face of Sentinel. The approach requires 2-3 hours and has several sections of 4th class which may require a rope. Start on the sandbench trail and work your way up the slope at the base of the East Face of Sentinel. Approach the upper tier by a loose and dangerous gulley system on the right, then cross over the tier to get to the base of the spire.

Rack: Standard nailing rack.

Descent: Rappel the route.

Issac-Tricks (of the trade)

Note: this route has mistakenly been called Tricks of the Tramp (taken from a preliminary topo)

FA John Middendorf, Brad Quinn, and Bill Hatcher, 1993

Grade V 5.10+, A2

This route only has 60 feet of aid in over 1800 feet of climbing. Some hard offwidths. Approach from the Court of the Patriarchs parking area and hike to the toe of the outermost buttress on Issac, the center of the three Patriarchs. The route starts in a clean 4" crack 50 feet right of a major chimney system on the outside of the buttress.

Rack: Standard Free Rack, plus 2 Birdbeaks, 2 Lost Arrows, and 1 each baby angle.

Descent: Continue to the summit of Issac, then descend slabs to the northeast. Several rappels may be needed to continue into the drainage between Issac and Jacob. Hike down the drainage to the hanging valley and continue rappelling. Allow 6 hours for descent.

[You can read my story about this climb by clicking here](#)

Issac-Sands of Time

FA: Rick Lovelace and Paul Gagner, 1994

Approach via the Court of the Patriarch pullout. Start in an offwidth crack around the corner to the left of the Tricks buttress. Excellent location. The upper part of this route climbs the crack on the outside (south) face of the upper buttress. The route ends on the top of the upper buttress (not the summit).

Rack: Standard Nailing rack, extra beaks and blades. 55 METER ROPES MANDATORY.

Descent: Rappel the route.

The Spearhead-Iron Messiah

FA: Ron Olevsky solo, 1988

FFA: Darren Cope and Jeff Rickerl, 1989

Grade III, 5.10

This classic Zion route climbs to the shoulder left of the Spearhead formation. Park at the Grotto Parking area. Hike south (left) on trail to second or third drainage. Hike up drainage. To find the start, you must first locate the obvious upper corner the route follows. Climb to the start of the route 50 yards past an exposed traverse, then mantle to the base some easy 5th class climbing. The first pitch is a bolted face climb just to the right of a right facing corner. A bizarre 3 pitch bolted variation avoids the short 5.10 section above the third pitch.

Rack: Standard Zion free rack, #5 Camalot optional.

Descent: Rappel the route.

Routes in the Middle Canyon-WEST SIDE

Red Arch Mountain-Shune's Buttress

FA: Steve Chardon, Dave Jones, 1980

FFA: Conrad Anker, Dave Jones, 1992

Grade IV, 5.11c

Rack: Standard free rack, extra hand sized cams and hexes.

This route starts on the North face of Red Arch Mountain, the outstanding formation that towers over the Zion Lodge. On the Northwest corner of Red Arch Mountain, an obvious finger pinnacle is seen. Hike up to the left side of the base of the finger pinnacle. This route is the Astroman of Zion, with an incredible 5.11c overhanging thin hands and finger pitch up high.

Descent: Rappel the route.

The Mountain of the Sun-The Tao of Light

FA: Paul Turecki, John Middendorf, 1994

Grade VI, 5.10, A3

This route ascends the arete on the left side of the major corner on the Mountain of the Sun. Park at the Court of the Patriarchs pullout, and hike up below the huge arch on the right side of the Mountain of the Sun. An excellent Zion mixed route (free and aid) in a outrageous

location. Good bivouac ledges on the top of pitches 5 and 12.

Rack: Standard nailing rack. 60 METER ROPES MANDATORY.

Descent: Descend the back side, or rappel the route.

Right Twin-Peyote Dreams

FA: Eric Rasmussen, Sean Plunkett, 1994.

Grade VI, 5.10, A3+

Rack: Standard Nailing rack, extra pitons and hooks.

An excellent find by Eric. Sweet splitter cracks up the center of the Right Twin Brother formation. Scope the route with high powered binoculars. This is one of the longer routes in the park and sure to be a hard classic.

Descent: Scramble and rappel down obvious slabs to the south to the drainage. 2 rappels down drainage to the ground.

Mount Spry-Sandblaster

FA: Jeff Lowe and Mark Wilford.

IV, 5.11

RACK: Standard free rack, plus some offwidth protection.

This climb climbs the left most of three obvious cracks seen from the pullout just north of the junction at the base of the switchbacks. Excellent crack and wild wide climbing.

Descent: It is possible to rappel from the top of the third pitch, otherwise, continue to the top and descend down canyon behind with several rappels.

Classics

Mostly Free and/or Clean routes: Moonlight Buttress, Touchstone Wall, Spaceshot, Prodigal Son, Shune's Buttress, Monkeyfinger, Iron Messiah, [Issac](#).

Nailing Routes: Lunar Ecstasy, Desert Shield, Lowe Route on Angel's Landing.

Routes by type

Free and clean routes: Moonlight Buttress, Touchstone Wall, Shune's Buttress, Monkeyfinger, Sandblaster, The Iron Messiah, Free or Burn.

Mostly free and clean routes: Tricks, Lovelace, Cowboy Bob Goes to Zion, Uncertain Fates.

Shorter nailing big wall routes: Lunar Ecstasy, Swoop Gimp, Desert Shield, The Fang Spire, Birdbeak Spire.

Longer nailing big wall routes: The Tao of Light, Peyote Dreams, Sands of Time.

The Routes on Angel's Landing

1. The Northeast Buttress. IV, 5.11a.

FA: Mark Austin, Randy Aton, and Phil Haney, 1981.

Rack: 1 1/2 sets Friends, stoppers, hexes, slings.

This excellent all free alpine type route starts on the east side of the ridge between Angel's Landing and the Organ.

2. The Swiss American Route. VI, 5.9, A4.

FA: Xaver Bongard and John Middendorf, 10/19 to 10/22, 1991.

Rack: 10 Knifeblades, 12 Lost Arrows, 4 each 1/2" and 5/8" pitons, 2 each 3/4" pitons, 1 each 1" pitons, 2 1/2 sets of Friends, nuts, hooks, beaks.

An excellent route up the continuous crack systems leading directly to the summit. 14 holes drilled on the first ascent (all belay bolts).

3. Original (Lowe) Route. V, 5.8, A2.

FA: Jeff Lowe and Cactus Bryan, 9/70.

Rack: Standard desert rack (2 sets TCU's and Friends to #4, nuts and slings), plus 10 to 15 pitons, mostly KB's and LA's. Only pitch 7 requires nailing, otherwise all clean.

A popular introduction to Zion big wall climbing. A spectacular route with several good bivouac sites.

4. Angel Hair. V, 5.9, A3.

FA: Dean Tschappat and James Dunn, 1974.

Rack: Knifeblades to 6" bongs, nuts.

No bolts used on the first ascent. Jimmy Dunn believes this route may go all free. Lots of difficult chimneys.

5. Empty Pages. VI, 5.8, A4.

FA: Dave Jones and Mark Pey, 5/29 to 5/31, 1982.

Rack: 6 KB's, 8 LA's, 6 each 1/2" pitons, 3 each 5/8" pitons, 2 each 3/4" pitons, 1 each 1", 1 1/4" pitons, rurps, hooks, 2 to 3 sets of Friends and TCUs, nuts, #3 copperheads for shallow drilled holes.

Serious hooking (some manufactured) and some loose rock. No anchors on top. Bolt kit may be required for blown out drilled copperhead holes.

6. Archangel. VI 5.8, A3.

FA Ron Olevsky solo, 10/1 to 10/8, 1978.

Rack: Pitons and nuts to 3", keyhole hangers.

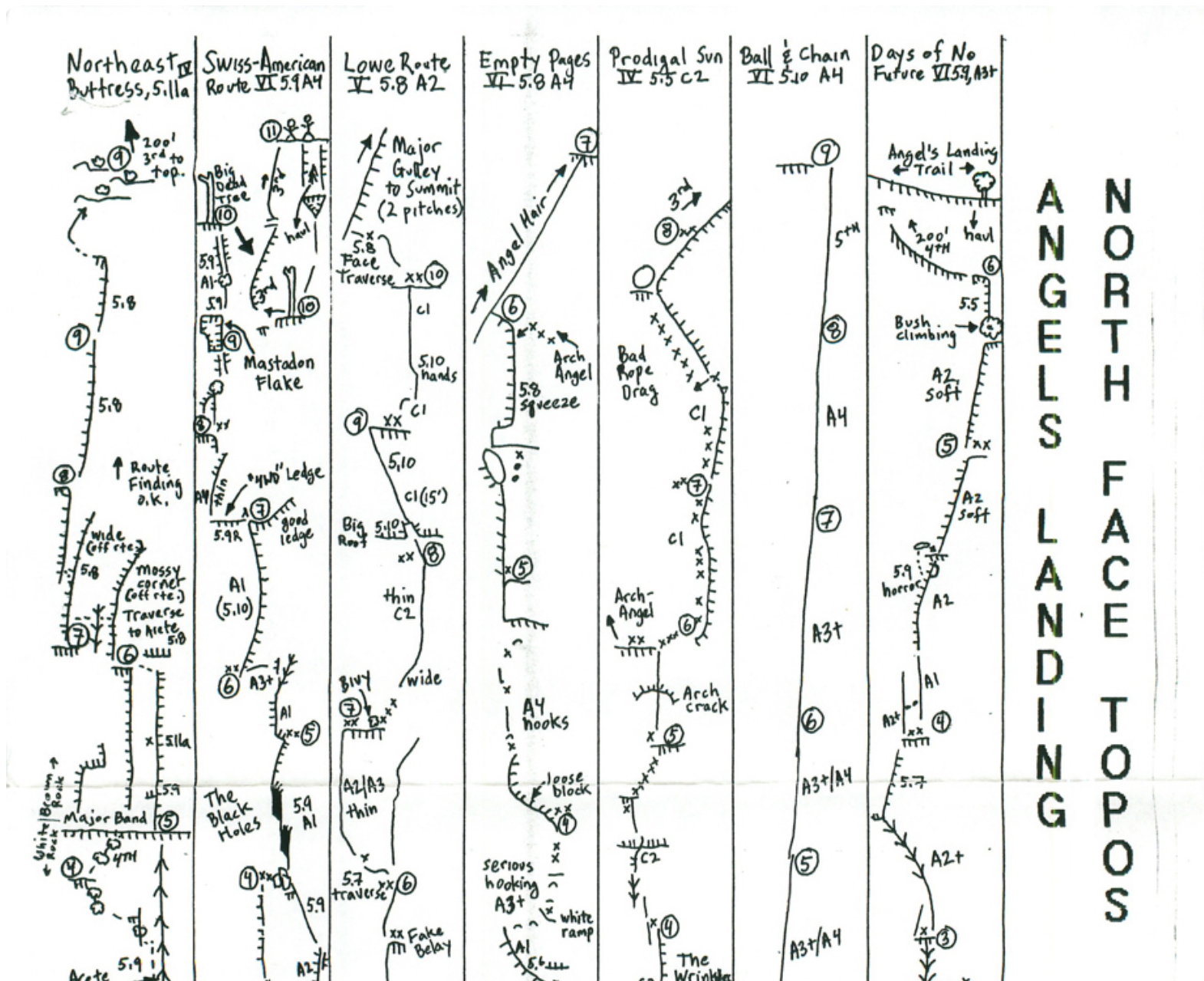
Many bolts and fixed pitons. Mostly follows the Prodigal Sun route.

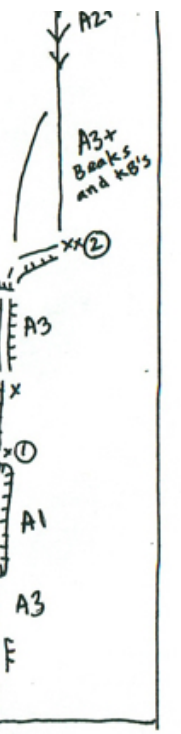
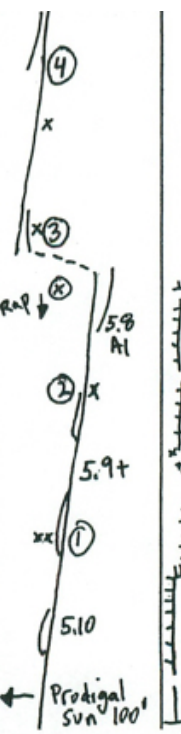
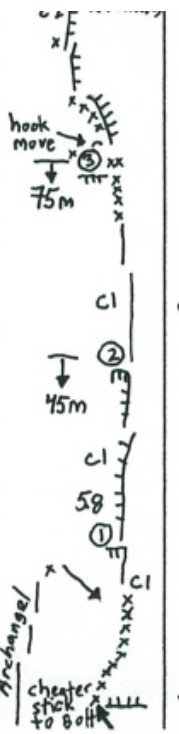
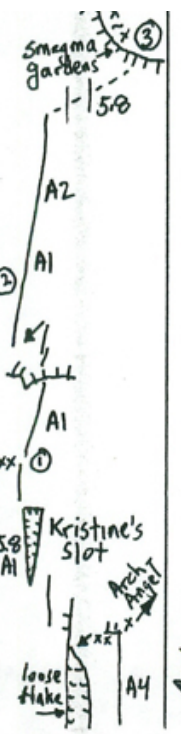
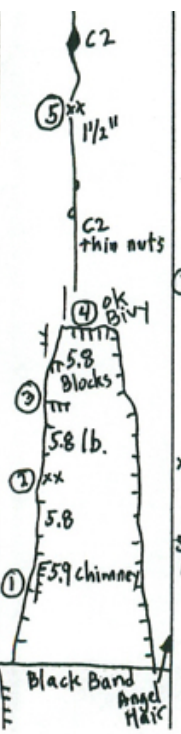
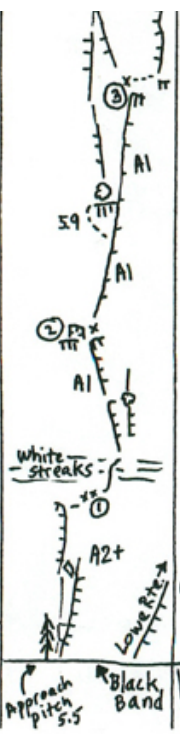
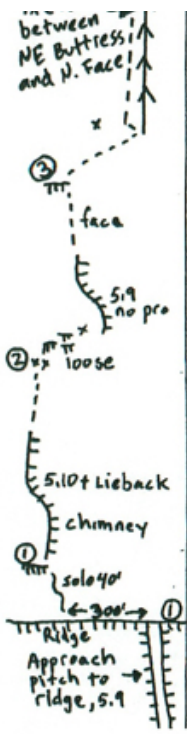
7. Prodigal Sun. IV 5.5, A2.

FA: Ron Olevsky, solo, 9/81.

Rack: 1 set of Friends, many small nuts, one hook, keyhole hangers.

Prodigal Sun is a clean aid route and is an excellent introduction to multi-pitch aid routes. Many bolts, fixed pitons, and manufactured placements keeps the difficulty to a minimum, and makes for fast climbing.





A Brief History of Climbing in Zion.

Rock climbing in Zion began in the 20's with the ascent of the Great White Thone by W.H.W Evans. William H. Evans, who is described in a Superintendent's memo (dated 7/13/27) as a "distinctly daredevil type and a mountaineer", arrived in the park on June 20, 1927 and heard that the Great White Throne had not been ascended. One June 24, he made an attempt to climb the north side but was thwarted by steepening walls and returned to the valley floor realizing that it was not the right way to go. On June 27, armed with but 15 feet of rope and a small canteen of water, climbed to the saddle on the south side, and made his way up slabs to the summit whereupon he made several signal fires that night to prove his accomplishment to the people in the Grotto auto camp below. The next morning, he began his descent and fell. A historic rescue effort, led by Chief Ranger Ruesch, was organized the following day after his absence. After several days of searching, the rescuers found Evans motionless among the bushes at the saddle. He was delirious from shock, covered with severe bruises and sporting a cracked skull, and remembered little of the preceding days after his fall. His rescuers carried him to the East Rim Trail where he was placed on a horse and carried down, chastised for his recklessness.

On June 30, 1931, Dan Orcutt made the second ascent via Evan's route, and reported finding a human skull on the summit, perhaps the remains of some venturesome native. Both Evans and Orcutt's ascents were condemned by the park, as they were "improperly executed and done in a manner that is strongly disapproved by all alpinists having recognized reputations" (quoted from a 1931 Park Service memo).

The second major formation climbed in Zion was the Cathedral, presumably from the Angel's Landing Trail, by Walter Becker, Fritz Becker, and Rudolph Weidner on August 31, 1931. This was a technical climb for the day, which was climbed with ropes and involved a difficult chimney and an overhanging rock which "taxed all their powers of ingenuity and endurance to pass".

In 1933, the West Temple was climbed by an 8 man team, with the brothers Norman and Newell Crawford reaching the summit. The East Temple was climbed in 1937 by Glen Dawson, Dick Jones, Homer Fuller, Wayland Gilbert, and Jo Momyer, followed by an ascent of the Sentinel by Bob Brinton and Glen Dawson in 1938. All of these routes are described as treacherous climbing on loose white rock, with insecure footings and holds. Today the historic ascents are still considered difficult with sections of 5th class climbing, and not for the casual hiker.

The Great White Throne, subject of a commemorative stamp of the 1934 National Park series, received only a few ascents over the next 20 years, including the fourth ascent by the legendary husband and wife team of Herb and Jan Conn in 1949.

Modern climbing in Zion began in 1967 with the ascent of the Great White Thone via the Northwest Face, the first of Zion's big walls to be climbed. Prior to this ascent, the Park Service had long refused to give permission for climbing the long and steep canyon-side faces. Fred Beckey had gained permission after sending a letter to the park guaranteeing a Seattle based rescue team on call, and particulars of each of the original team member's experience: Warren Harding, Galen Rowell, Eric Bjornstadt, and Fred Beckey. By the time permission had actually been granted, the team changed to Fred Beckey and Galen Rowell and Pat Callis, who spent several days preparing the lower section, and made the first ascent on May 5-7, 1967.

George Lowe, Karl Dunn, Dick Bell, Robert Sears, Peter Gibbs and others were also active in the mid to late 1960's with technical ascents of many formations, including the west face of Bridge Mountain in 1965, the east face of Sentinel in 1966, the Twin Brothers in 1968, and Mt. Spry in 1970.

In the early 70's, Jeff Lowe, with various partners including Cactus Byran, Mike Weis, Bruce Roghaar, John Weiland, and Wick Beavers established a number of difficult modern wall routes, awesome achievements especially considering the tools of the day (passive chocks and pitons). These routes included the north and east faces of Angel's Landing, The Toad on the north face of Sentinel, the southeast buttress of Issac, and the mega classic, Moonlight Buttress.

Bill Forrest and Bill March dominated the mid 70's with outstanding first ascents of Grade VI's in Kolob and the main canyon, while Jimmy Dunn bagged a few outstanding lines, including a new route with no bolts on the North Face of Angel's Landing (Angel Hair) with Dean Tschappat.

In the late 70's and early 80's, Ron Olevsky and Dave Jones were responsible for a new wave of quality routes, while also developing a new clean ethic largely made possible by the advent of Friends™, which revolutionized climbing smooth parallel cracks in the desert. Two separate trends that enabled many of the longer routes to be climbed clean developed: Ron Olevsky began a trend of modifying placements on routes to enable subsequent ascents to be completely clean, while Dave Jones found natural lines and pushed free climbing standards so that fewer non- clean placements were necessary. Routes of this period include The Thunderbird Wall and Catharsis in Kolob, and Monkeyfinger Wall, Spaceshot, Touchstone Wall, Shune's Buttress, and the Fang Wall in the main canyon (to name a few of the routes established during this prolific era).



Throughout Zion's history, many short routes had been established in the park, but the big attraction had always been the walls. Several trends developed in the 1990's. First, attempts to climb the harder aid lines on the walls resulted in the first ascent of the Streaked Wall by Mugs Stump and Conrad Anker in 4 days (VI, 5.10, A4+), followed shortly thereafter by the first ascent of [Abraham](#) in the Court of the Patriarchs by John Middendorf and Walt Shipley up the overhanging southwest buttress (The Radiator, VI, 5.10+, A4). Trying to free climb the aid pitches on the walls led to free ascents of routes like Monkeyfinger Wall (V, 5.11+) in 1989 by Mike ODonnell and Craig Kenyon and Shune's Buttress (IV, 5.11c) on Red Arch Mountain by Conrad Anker and Dave Jones. In 1992, Peter Croft and Jonny Woodward climbed Moonlight Buttress free (V, 5.13b), thus establishing the most sustained and highest standard free climbing route on sandstone in the world. Multiple route speed ascents have been another trend. In 1991, Conrad Anker and John Middendorf climbed the first link- up when they climbed Touchstone Wall and the northeast buttress of Angel's Landing in 8 hours, and in 1992 Doug Heinrich and Seth Shaw climbed Space Shot, Monkeyfinger, and Touchstone in an 18 hour period, later upped to four walls in a 24 hour period by Heinrich and Anker with the addition of Moonlight Buttress.

Climbing traffic in Zion has increased considerably in the 90's. In 1991, 105 climbers spent a total of 190 nights bivouacked on Zion's walls, either on small ledges or in portaledge. Today, this number has increased dramatically. It is imperative that conservation be the number one rule for climbers in Zion, as it is a precious natural unrenewable resource.



[RETURN TO Zion Info](#)

EL CAPITAN

The Beta for Doing *The Nose-in-a-Day*

One of the finest routes in the world, *The Nose* on El Capitan, offers pitch after pitch of high-quality climbing, exposure, thrills, and perfect rock — it's got it all! For many, *The Nose* is a three- or four-day climb of a lifetime, but for a growing number of others, the goal is to do its 3000' in one day (aka doing *The Nose-in-a-day*).

This task requires being adept at all facets of rock climbing. Although a technical ability of only 5.11 is necessary, a potential *Nose-in-a-day* climber should be able to cruise over semi-difficult rock (hard 5.10 and moderate 5.11) confidently, swiftly, and efficiently. Plus, he/she should be able to deal effortlessly with ropes, anchors, racks, belays, and a pack. *The Nose-in-a-day* requires a special breed of climber, one who has the wall climber's ability to improvise and the free climber's ability to cruise.

Much of the route can be most efficiently climbed "French-free," a technique much akin to modern-day hang-dogging, only quicker. A typical "French-free" section on *The Nose* entails running it out 20' on 5.10, placing a piece, grabbing it, yarding past, running it out again, and so on. On easier ground, pure free climbing is best. "Whatever's fastest" is the rule, but keep in mind that haste makes waste — unnecessary energy expenditure is sure to catch up. On a long route like *The Nose*, maintaining steady pace boils down to speed.

Only five sections require aiders; none are longer than 60', and they total less than 250'. Nonetheless, good aid skills are a must.

The System. Although *The Nose* was originally done in a day by a party of three, improved techniques and gear have made a two-man team most effective. Assuming both members want an equal share of the leads, it is most efficient to alternate leading "blocks" of pitches (six or so) at a time. The second jumars each pitch carrying the pack. Actually, jumaring with the pack is more strenuous and exhausting than leading; therefore, the best scenario would have a fast climber leading the entire route, and a gorilla with 30" biceps merrily jugging every pitch. The block system works because the leader can stay focused in "lead-mode," and get a rest after each lead, whereas swapping leads forces the second to go directly from jumaring to leading with no rest.

With the block system, it is ideal for

team members to switch ends of the rope after each lead. This is most speedily affected by having permanently tied loops at either end, each climber affixing the rope to his harness via a locking carabiner (two opposed locking carabiners are safer).

After leading a pitch, the leader's first job is to tie off the rope (*The Nose* has predominantly fixed belays) and



Photo: Michael Bengte

shout "off-belay, jumar when ready." The second immediately starts jumaring and cleaning, securely tied in to his jumars with daisy chains. When seconding a block of pitches, never unclip from the jumar/daisy-chain setup. As the second nears the belay, the leader should be prepared to immediately begin the next pitch, needing only the rack and a belay. When the second arrives, he transfers the cleaned rack to the leader, unclips his end of the rope from his harness (the jumars are his anchor), and gives it to the leader, who then exchanges it for his anchored end. The second then puts the leader on belay, and the vertical quest continues. The second should clip into the anchored end at some point.

With a coordinated effort between partners, the changeover at belays shouldn't take more than a couple minutes; many things can be done to speed things up. For example, the second should keep the rack organized while cleaning so reracking at the belay is kept to a minimum. When the second reaches the belay, he should

immediately relinquish the rack to the leader, and then prepare for the belay. The belayer's setup time should never exceed the leader's preparation time. Changeovers must be kept to a frantic minimum.

Also, belays can be partially cleaned as the leader is setting up the higher belay. Changeovers are most easily done at ledges. On aid sections, clip the aiders into a free biner on the rack so they're ready for clipping the next piece. Also, it's more efficient if the leader remains independent of the belayer; that is, if the leader wants tension, he should clip directly into a piece with a fifi hook. Of course, the belayer is needed for pendulums and tension traverses. Dozens of other little "tricks" are best learned through experience. Always be aware of maximizing efficiency.

Simul-climbing is a time-saving method, albeit a dangerous one. It involves both members climbing at the same time with gear placed by the leader as the only protection, i.e. no fixed belay. Therefore, this technique should be used only by very competent climbers at a level well below their limit. The following scenario on "How to Climb The Route" recommends simul-climbing in only two 30' sections. More simul-climbing can be incorporated, but is not recommended; although it can save time, simul-climbing may not be energy efficient because the second is forced to free climb with the pack, perhaps at an uncomfortable rhythm.

If there are parties above on the route, you'll likely need to pass. However, this is a difficult skill to master, requiring courtesy and patience. It may be impossible to pass for several pitches; graceful passing requires that a faster party be aware of natural breaks in the route, so when the opportunity arises, it can sneak by. It is the faster party's responsibility to minimize delaying the slower party.

Training. The best training for *The Nose-in-a-day* is doing long routes and climbing all day on the crags, especially those with approaches. Obviously, it's best to do a lot of climbing with your *Nose-in-a-day* partner to become familiar with each other's climbing style. Also, soloing is an excellent way to "move" and find your natural rhythm. Below is a list of good training routes. The hours in parenthesis are my times on these routes: they are given as a gauge — the same pace should break 12 hours on the Nose. *Routes Climbed Alternating Leads.* Sentinel: Chouinard-Herbert, Steck Salathé, West Face (4-5 hrs, 1hr to base). El Capitan: West

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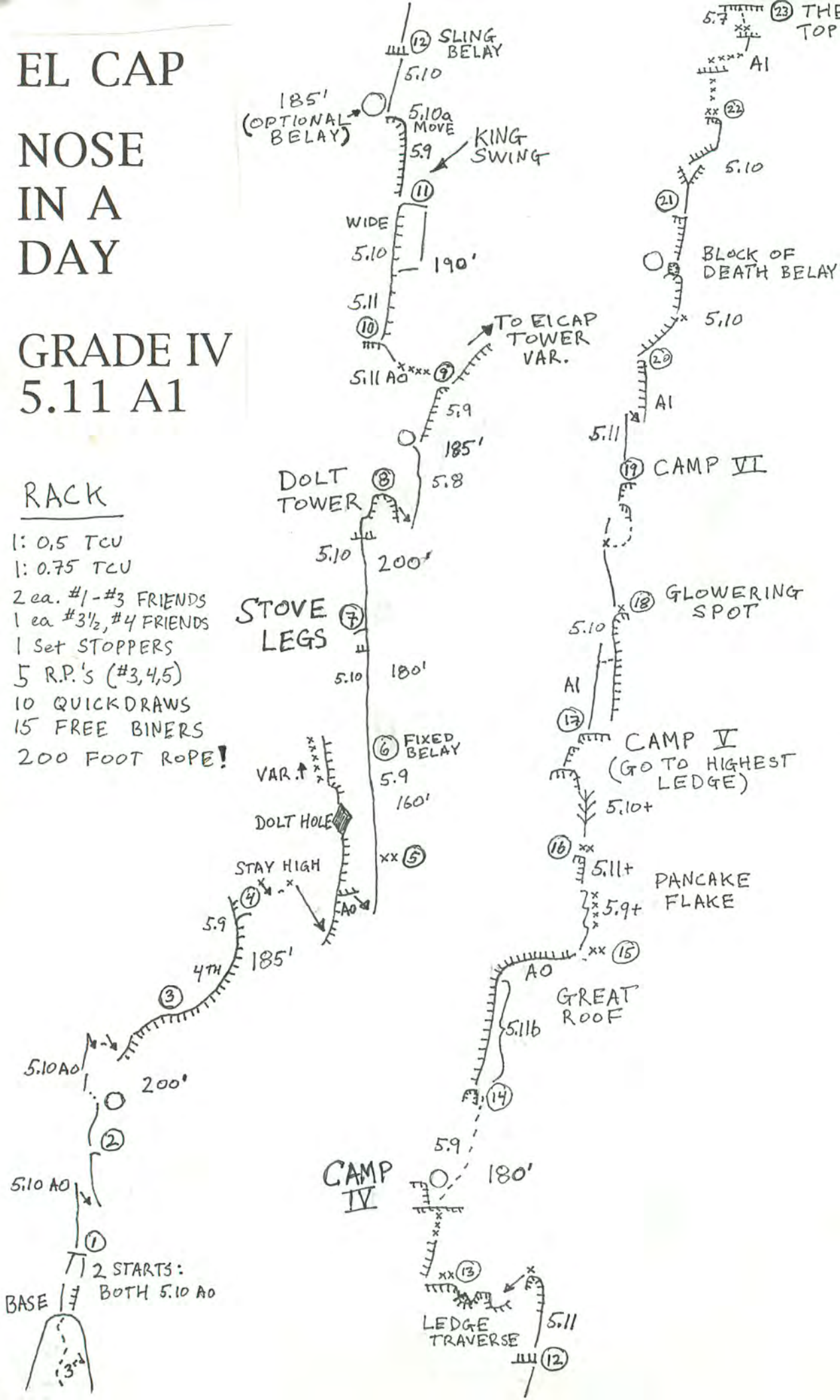
EL CAP

NOSE IN A DAY

GRADE IV 5.11 A1

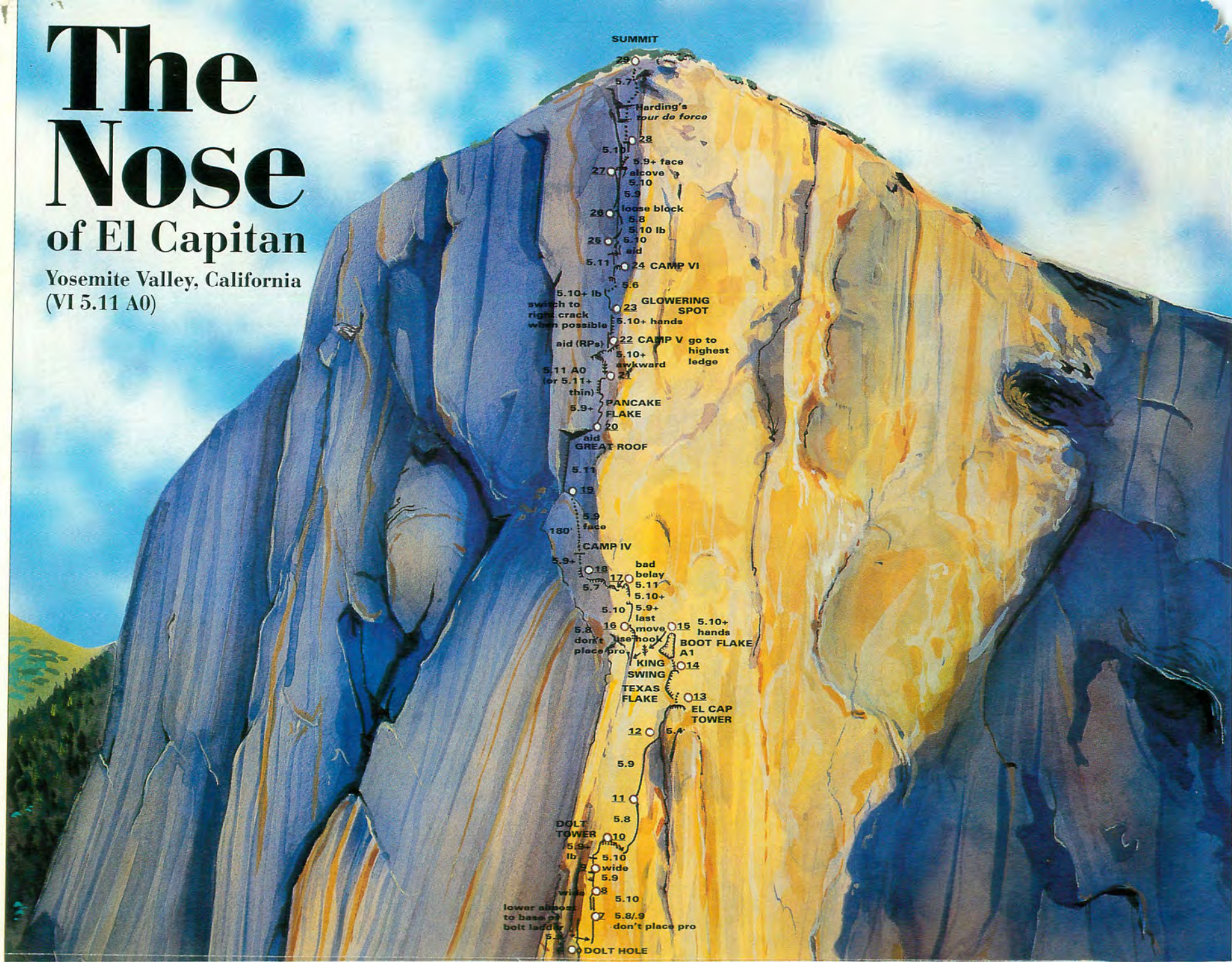
RACK

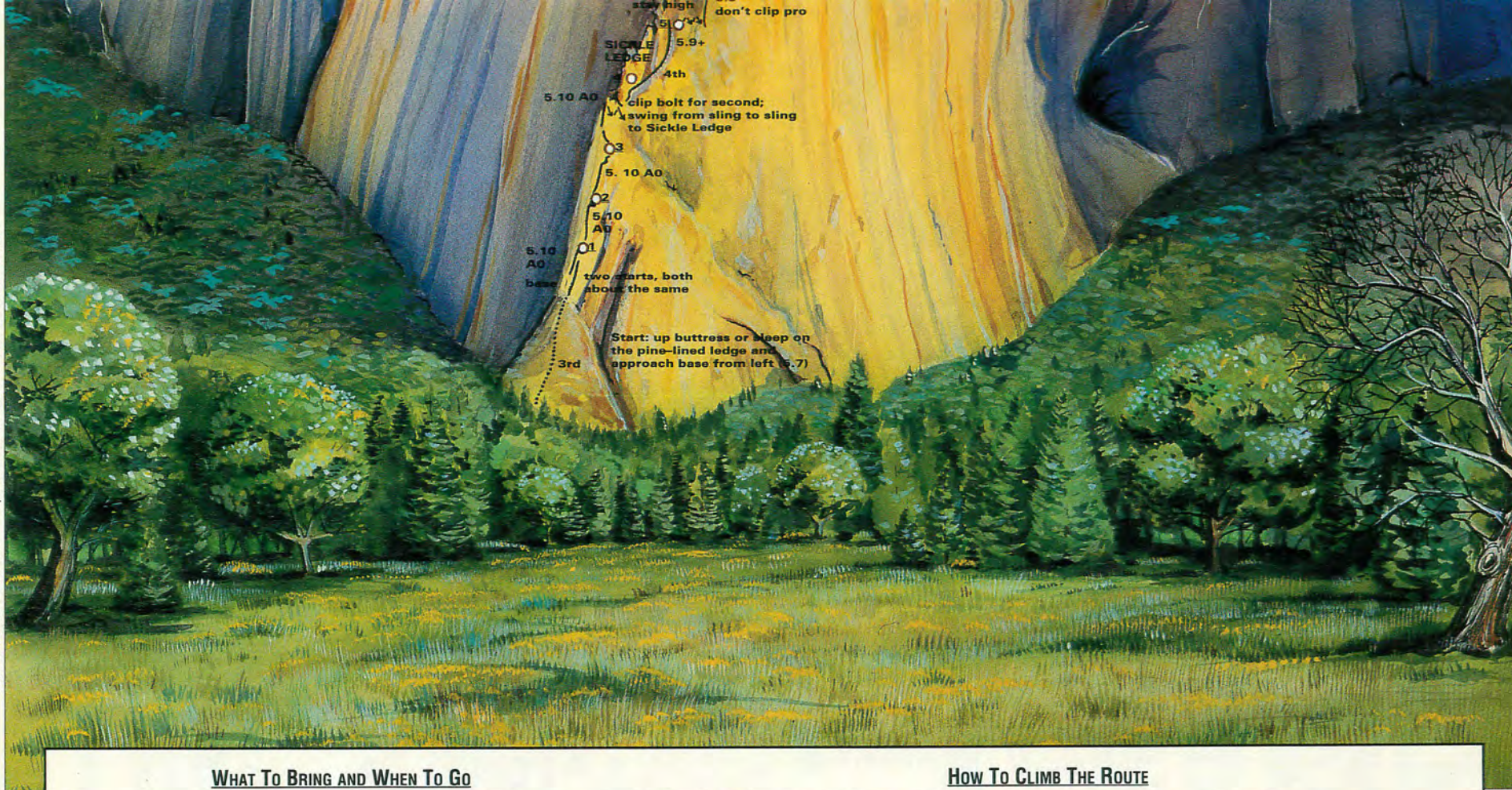
- 1: 0.5 TCU
- 1: 0.75 TCU
- 2 ea. #1-#3 FRIENDS
- 1 ea #3½, #4 FRIENDS
- 1 Set STOPPERS
- 5 R.P.'s (#3,4,5)
- 10 QUICKDRAWS
- 15 FREE BINERS
- 200 FOOT ROPE!



The Nose of El Capitan

Yosemite Valley, California
(VI 5.11 A0)





WHAT TO BRING AND WHEN TO GO

Two gear loops — one per person
Personal gear — harness, shoes, chalk bag, Muntner locking biner, 3" daisy loop with fifi hook attached, tied to harness (optional)
Rack — Friends: 2 — #1, 1 — #1 1/2, 2 — #2, 1 — #2 1/2, 1 — #3, 1 — #3 1/2, 1 — #4; 8 wired Stoppers; RP #3, 4, 5 (2 each); 4 quickdraws; 15–18 free biners; 3–5 slings; 1 hook (for King Swing)
Ropes — One 10mm or 11mm X 165-foot rope (180 feet is advantageous); one 7 mm X 165-foot rope (optional; for retreat and occasional pack hauling)
Other gear — One pack; one belay/rappel device (to be shared; also

know the Muntner hitch); one pair of jumars w/ aiders and daisy chains attached; one pair lightweight aiders (1/2" aiders fit in a pocket)
Water — Amount depends on conditions; 1 gallon per person is probably the maximum.
Food — Easily digestible, high energy (fruit, bagels, energy bars).
Optional — Warm clothes and headlamp in case you don't make it.
Seasons — May through July are best. August and September can get exceedingly hot; fall days grow shorter and colder, with more late-afternoon thundershowers.

HOW TO CLIMB THE ROUTE

Pitches 1-4: These can be done in less than an hour. French-free.
Pitch 5: Some simul-climbing is required. As soon as the leader clips into belay, the second jumars.
Pitch 6: Stay high, no pro to Dolt Hole so the second can swing across easily.
Pitch 7: Aiders optional for bolt ladder, lower to small roof, swing to Stovelegs, no pro to belay so second can swing across (after lowering a bit).
Pitch 8-10: Stovelegs. Probably the most strenuous part of the route. A pitch can be eliminated with long pitches, but then the benefit of fixed belays is lost.

Pitch 10-13: Easy to El Cap Tower. Belay second (instead of jumaring) on Pitch 13.
Pitch 14: Texas Flake, no pro, leader swings rope outside of Texas Flake for second (strenuous jumar).
Pitch 15: First part is aid (first time aiders are needed). Second part is 5.10+ hands, #2–2.5 Friends.
Pitch 16: King Swing. Use a hook on the slings midway, then flip it off after second swing. No pro to belay (except maybe for the last move, then unclip it) so second can lower out easier. (Possible with one rope)
Pitch 17: Hard free climbing, bad belay.
Pitch 18: Boulder hopping, jingus for

the second.
Pitch 19: 180 feet of simul-climbing.
Pitch 20: Great Roof. First part goes mostly free, aid under roof (aiders).
Pitch 21: 5.9 + flake, French-free last 20-foot section.
Pitch 22: Awkward, go to highest Camp V ledge.
Pitch 23: Aid (aiders), RPs. Switch to right crack and free climb after 50 feet.
Pitch 24: All free to Camp VI.
Pitch 25: Overhanging hands, then tension to right crack; aid (aiders) for 30 feet, then free to belay.
Pitch 26-28: All free.
Pitch 29: Bolt ladder (aiders) to summit.

A5 ADVENTURES

complete big wall outfitters

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NOSE-IN-A-DAY

Doing the Nose Route on El Cap in a day (a.k.a. "doing the Nose-in-a-day") is a great adventure. Pitch after pitch of high-quality climbing, exposure, thrills... it's got it all! Definitely one of the finest routes in the world: 3000 feet of excellent climbing, all of which can be done in one day.

To do the Nose-in-a-day, a minimum level of climbing experience is required. Although a technical ability of only 5.11 is necessary, a potential Nose-in-a-day climber should be able to cruise over semi-difficult rock (i.e. moderate 5.11 and hard 5.10) confidently, swiftly, and efficiently. Plus he/she should have an innate ability to effortlessly deal with the rope(s), anchors, racks, belays, and the pack (easier said than done). I feel that the Nose-in-a-day requires a special breed of climber, having known a substantial number of 5.12ers (and 5.13ers) who would find it impossible, despite their technical prowess. The Nose-in-a-day requires the wall-climbers ability to improvise, combined with the free-climbers ability to cruise.

Much of the climbing on the Nose is most efficiently done utilizing the "French-free" technique (much akin to modern-day hangdogging, only quicker). French-free consists of getting up a pitch as fast as possible, with a minimum of effort. A typical french-free section on the Nose would entail running it out 20 feet on 5.10, placing a piece, grabbing and yarding past it, and continuing. On easier ground, no grabbing is necessary, and, on the 5.11 sections, more grabbing is often quicker and more energy-efficient. "Whatever's fastest" is the rule, yet keep in mind that haste makes waste, and unnecessary energy expenditure is sure to catch up to you. On a route as long as the Nose, Pace and Rhythm become just as important as speed.

Aid: there are only five sections of pure aid (where aiders are necessary), none longer than 60 feet, and all-in-all totalling less than 250 feet during the entire 3000 foot route. The rest is either pure-free or french-free.

What to Bring

Two gear slings--one per person

Rack (see Topo)

Personal gear--harness, shoes, chalk-bag, Müntner locking biner,

3" daisy loop with fifi attached--tie to harness (optional).

1 10mm-11mm Rope--165' (180' could be advantageous).

1 7mm x 165' Rope (optional--for retreat and occasional pack-hauling).

1 Nose-in-a-day Pack (or equivalent)

Water--amount depends on conditions; 1 gallon per person may not be excessive, though 1 gallon total will often be enough.

Food--easily digestible energy food (like Jack LaLane bars!)

1 Belay/rappel device (to be shared. Also, know the müntner hitch).

1 Pair Jumars w/ aiders and daisies attached.

1 Pair lightweight aiders.

Warm clothes (optional)--in case you don't make it.

Headlamp(s)--ditto.

The System

A well coordinated team of two is most efficient. Though the Nose was originally done in a day with a party of three, techniques (and gear) have evolved making the two-man team best suited for the experience. Assuming both members of the team want an equal share of the leads, it is most efficient if the leader leads a "block" of pitches at a time (say, six or so pitches in a row) before the team alternates leaders. Thus for each block, one man will lead (the "leader") and one will jumar with the pack (the "second"). (Actually jumaring with the pack is more strenuous and exhausting than leading; thus, the optimal method would be for a fast climber to lead the entire route, and someone with 30-inch biceps to follow the whole thing). The block system is more efficient than alternating leads, because the leader can remain in the "lead-mode" for a period of time, and gets a rest after each lead; most importantly, however, the second doesn't have to go directly from jumaring to leading with no rest (except when there is a change of leaders).

With the block system, it is most efficient if the leader and second can switch ends of the rope after each lead. This is most speedily done if each climber clips a permanently tied loop at each end of the rope into a locking biner (two opposed locking biners would be safer) on his harness.

The block system goes thus: leader leads, gets to belay, immediately ties off rope (the Nose is predominantly fixed belays), shouts, "off-belay, jumar when ready" (or equivalent). The second immediately starts jumaring (with the pack), cleans the pitch (remembering to be tied in with the jumar daisies--in fact, when the second is seconding a block of pitches, he is never unclipped from the jumar/daisy set-up). As the second nears the upper belay, the leader has gotten a rest, and is prepared to immediately start leading the next pitch, needing only the rack and a belay. So, when the second arrives at the upper belay, he'll transfer the rack he just cleaned to the leader, unclip his end of the rope from his harness (the jumars are his anchor), give his end to the leader (who will clip it into his harness, and unclip his previous end). The second then puts the leader on belay, and the leader continues the vertical quest. (the second should clip into the other end at some point.)

The whole process at the belays shouldn't take more than a couple minutes. This, however, requires a coordinated effort between partners, and many things can be done to speed things up. For example, as he/she cleans, the second should keep the rack organized so reracking at the belay is kept to a minimum. Other: belays can be partially cleaned as the leader is setting up the higher belay. Leader changeovers are most easily done at ledges. On aid sections, clip the aiders into a free-biner on the rack, so for clipping into the next piece, the free-biner and aider go as one. Also, I've found it to be more efficient if the leader remains independent of the belayer; that is, if the leader wants tension, he should clip into the piece directly (with the fifi)--of course, the belayer is needed for pendelums and tension traverses. And dozens of other little "tricks" that are best learned through experience. Always be aware of ways to maximize efficiency, and you're sure to do well.

Specific Techniques (see Topo)

- Pitches 1 to 4: These can easily be done in less than an hour. French Free!
- Pitch 5: Some simul-climbing is required. As soon as the leader clips into belay, the second jumars.
- Pitch 6: Stay high, no pro to Dolt Hole, so second can swing across easily.
- Pitch 7: Aiders optional for bolt-ladder, lower to small roof, swing to Stove-legs, no pro to belay so second can swing across (after lowering a bit).
- Pitch 8-10: Stovelegs--probably the most strenuous part of the route. Perhaps another pitch can be eliminated with long pitches, but then the benefit of fixed belays is lost.
- Pitch 10-13: Easy, to El Cap Tower. Belay second (instead of jumaring) on pitch 13.
- Pitch 14: Texas Flake, no pro, leader swings rope outside of Texas Flake for second (strenuous jumars).
- Pitch 15: First part--aid (first time the aiders are needed). Second part--5.10+ hands, 2-2½ friends.
- Pitch 16: King Swing. Use a hook on the slings mid-way, then flip it off after second swing. No pro to belay (except maybe for the last move--then unclip it) so second can lower out easier.
- Pitch 17: Hard free-climbing, bad belay.
- Pitch 18: Boulder hopping, jingus for the second.
- Pitch 19: 180' simul-climbing.
- Pitch 20: Great Roof: first part goes mostly free, Aid under roof (aiders).
- Pitch 21: 5.9+ flake, french-free second section (after stance).
- Pitch 22: Awkward, go to highest Camp V ledge.
- Pitch 23: Aid (aiders)--RP's. Switch to right crack and free-climb after 50'
- Pitch 24: All free, to Camp VI.
- Pitch 25: Overhanging hands, then tension over to right crack--aid (aiders) for 30'. Then free to belay.
- Pitch 26: All free.
- Pitch 27: All free.
- Pitch 28: to bolt ladder.
- Pitch 29: Harding's bolt ladder--aid (aiders). To Summit.

Training

The best training for the Nose-in-a-day is to do long routes, and climb all day on the crags (the best crags are the ones with approaches, i.e. Arch Rock). Obviously, it's best to do a lot of climbing with your Nose-in-a-day partner, so as to "know" each other's climbing style. Also, soloing is an excellent way to 'move' and find your natural rhythm.

Below is a list of some good training routes. The hours in parenthesis are my times on these routes: they are given as a gauge--the same pace should break 12 hours on the Nose.

*Routes done in "swing-style", both people climb.

- Sentinel: Chouinard-Herbert, Steck Salathé, West Face (4-5 hrs. 1 hr. to base)
- West Face, El Cap (5½ hours, 1 hour approach).
- Astroman (Valley to Valley: 5½ hours).
- The Autobahn, SW Buttress of Half Dome, 5.11+, 10 pitches.
- Half Dome, NW Face, Reggae Route (5½ hours).

*Routes done in Nose-in-a-day style, second jumars.

- Washington Column, Direct South Face (4 hours).
- Lost Arrow Direct (8 hours).

*Soloable Routes

N.E. Buttress of Higher (hard and scary), then Braille Book.

Snake Dike--the approach is the main training benefit.

Washington's Column, Direct Route (5.7+).

Nutcracker (my record of 8 minutes, 47 seconds still stands--600').

Pre-Climb Preparation

- Three days before: longish route.
 - Two days before: loosen up on some moderate soloing, maybe a run around the loop. Eat well, and get lots of sleep.
 - One day before: complete rest, stretch, breathe, psyche. Carbo load.
- Sleeping at the base the night before the route always improves my psyche. (Note: fixing pitches is generally considered bogus, as the whole route isn't being done in a day). If you want the benefit of a bright moon, make sure to go three-five days before the full-moon, then it will be shedding light at sundown.

Good Luck!

--John Middendorf

Alterations to the Nose in a Day Article (attached copy has reference #'s)

A. Replace: "remembering to be" with "securely"

1. Replace: "unclips the other end" with "then exchanges it for his anchored end"

2. Replace: "other" with "anchored".

3. Insert: When the second reaches the belay, he should immediately relinquish the rack to the leader, and then prepare for the belay (rope management). Spontaneous lead action is necessary for the continuance of pace. The belayer's set-up time should never exceed the leader's preparation time. Changeovers must be kept to a frantic minimum.

4. Replace Paragraph:

Simul-climbing is a time-saving method, albeit a dangerous one. It involves both members climbing at the same time with the gear placed by the leader as the only protection, i.e. no fixed belay. Therefore the technique should be used only by very competent climbers at a level well below their limit. The following "How to climb the route" scenario describes simul-climbing in only two sections, each requiring about 30 feet of simul-climbing. More simul-climbing can be incorporated, though it is not really recommended: although time-efficient, simul-climbing is generally not energy-efficient, because the second must strenuously free-climb with a pack on, and at a pace which may not coincide with his own rhythm.

5. Insert the following two paragraphs:

The Nose-in-a-day beta described herein is not meant to be a definitive guide. Rather, it is merely a description of the gear and techniques used by Dave Schultz and myself on our shortest-day-of-the-year (Dec. 21) ascent of the Nose. Optimal speed-climbing techniques varies with conditions, nature of the rock, and team abilities. The climber is solely responsible for proper on-the-spot decision making.

A note on passing etiquette: Graceful passing of slower parties is a difficult skill to master. The lack of such skill often results in bitter verbal battles on the vertical realm. A slow party ahead can significantly hinder a fast party's progress. Often it becomes impossible to pass for many pitches. Notwithstanding, subtle natural breaks occur in any long-route climbing situation. Graceful passing requires the faster party to be keenly aware of such breaks, and sneak by. It is the faster party's responsibility to minimize the slower party's delay incurred by the pass (for those highest on a route have the natural right of way). Mutual cooperation aids a pass, thus courtesy and patience become the faster party's main tactics.

6. Add: ($\frac{1}{2}$ " web aiders easily fit in a pocket).

7. Add: (possible with one rope).

8. Replace: "second" with "last 20 feet"

9. Insert: "light"

10. Insert after "Carbo load.": An effective (for me) diet for the day before consist of large quantities of semi-salty pasta, vegetables, and frequent doses of Potassium Gluconate (helps endurance). Also, drink gallons and gallons of water. A caffeine jolt in the morning and a few malto-dextrin type candies (sweettarts) should trigger a positive energy flow.

IV 5.11 AO

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8 wired Stoppers

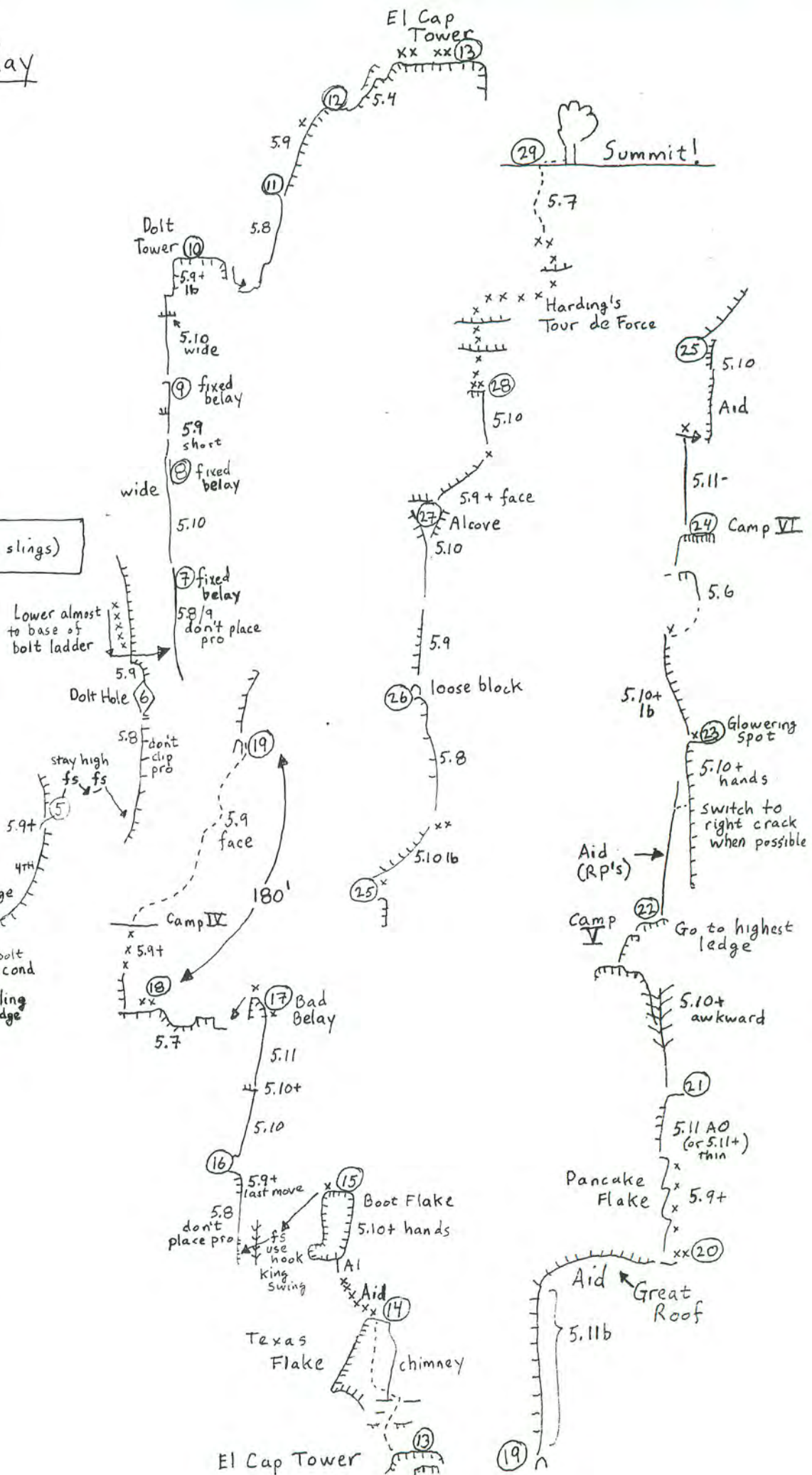
2 ea. RP: # 3, 4, 5

4 Quick-draws

15-18 free biners

3-5 slings

a hook (for King-Swing slings)



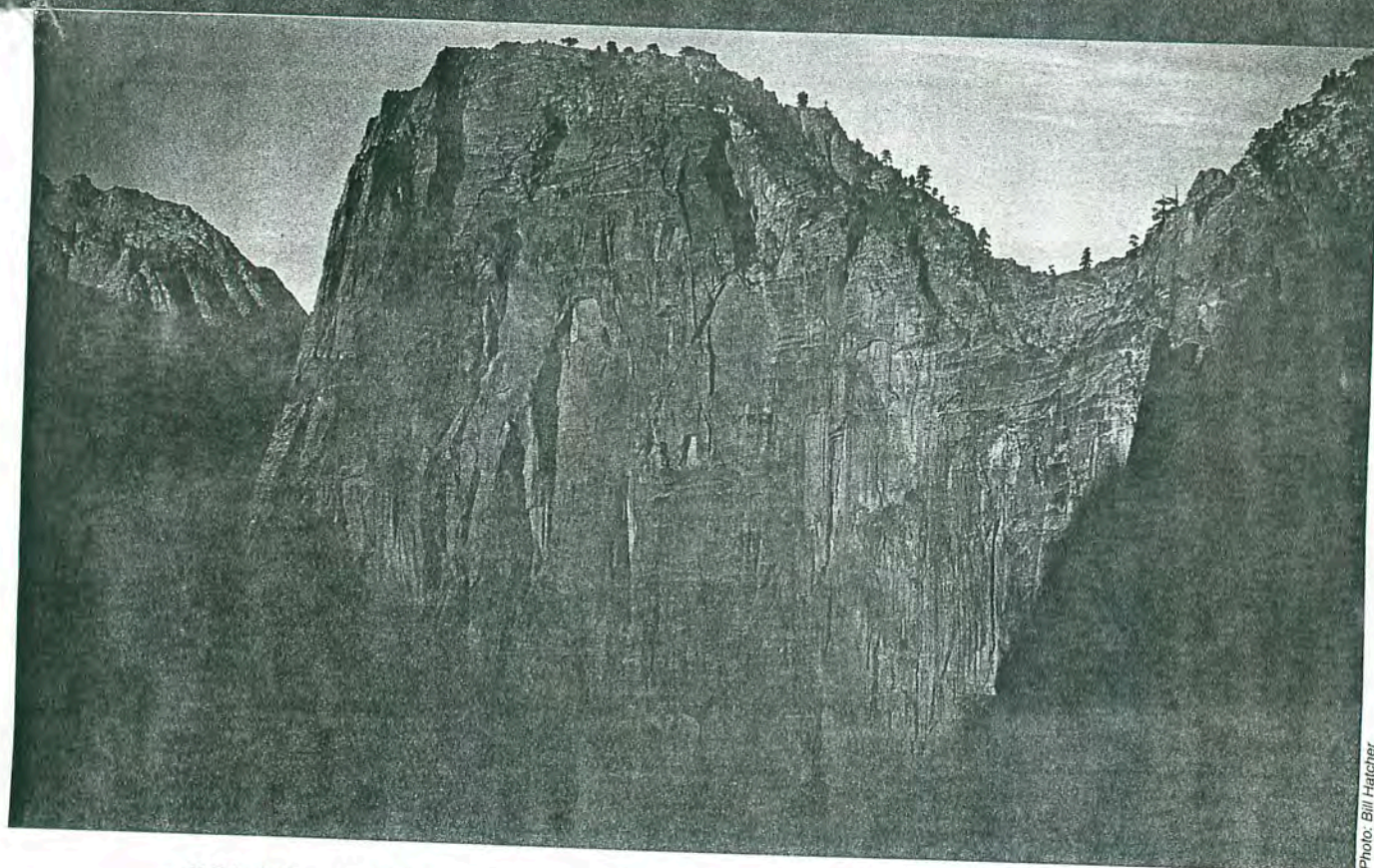


Photo: Bill Hatcher

"Civilized" big walls on the north face of Angel's Landing

Zion National Park, Utah

Legends of loose rock, tenuous protection, epic descents, hostile climate, poisonous flora and fauna, and wicked vertical bushwhacking keep most climbers from visiting Zion's sandstone cliffs. If you ever hear any of these tales, believe them and pass the word. But if you're interested in true adventure regardless of objective hazards, Zion is the New World.

Etched out of the landscape by the Virgin River in the southwest corner of Utah, the canyons of Zion National Park host numerous cliffs ranging from 600 to 2200 feet high. The rock is sandstone, each of its many layers generally recognizable by its color, and varies widely in terms of looseness, softness, and climbability. Angel's Landing, the centerpiece of Zion wall climbing, consists largely of Navajo sandstone, one of the more solid mediums in the region, typified by dark rock and clean cracks and corners.

Fourteen-hundred feet high, the north face of Angel's Landing offers nine excellent big-wall routes (including the all-free *Northeast Buttress*, not technically on the north face) on typically good rock, and in a spectrum of difficulty. For starters, there's the well-bolted *Prodigal Sun*, which tips the scale at a sane 5.5 A2. Then you have the serious nailups like *Empty Pages*, *Ball and Chain*, and the *Swiss-American Route*, all of which are sandstone A4. For classics there's the *Lowe Route* (5.8 A2), a moderate mixed route and a must for aspiring hardmen.

Angel's Landing, located mere minutes from the road by foot, has an approach to make a sport climber envious. The descent from the summit is equally casual: a two-mile paved trail winds down the hill in a beautiful setting. The difficulties of Angel's Landing routes are in the climbing itself, unlike many of Zion's other impressive walls where the approach and descent are serious undertakings in their own right.

Peregrine falcons nested on the north face of Angel's Landing in 1991, closing the wall to climbing during the fledgling season (January to mid-August). The peregrines traditionally make their yearly nests on either the Great White Throne, Cable Mountain, or Angel's Landing (both north and south faces). A closure may be in effect for 1992, so check at the visitor's center before climbing.

The Park Service requires a permit for climbs taking more than one day; request a backcountry permit and list the exact details of your intended route at the visitor's center, where you can also scan the two volumes of information compiled on most of Zion's established climbs.

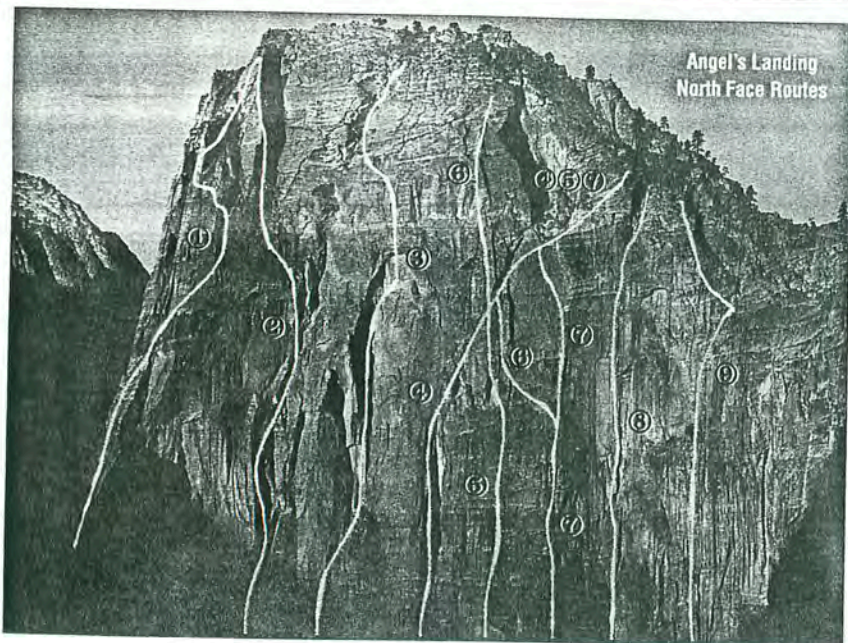
The campground, located just inside the south park entrance, makes a good basecamp, as do the private campgrounds in the adjacent town of Springdale, which often have showers (about \$2) available. Drinking water is available at the Zion Lodge, nestled deep inside Zion Canyon

on the way to Angel's Landing. Springdale has some food services, but for major shopping it's cheaper to go to a supermarket in St. George or Cedar City, both about an hour outside the park. The Bit and Spur in Springdale, known nationally for its fine Mexican food, is the recommended place to drink and feast.

The weather in Zion is extreme. Summer temperatures are often searing and winters can be bitter cold. Winter ascents are possible, but beware: snow-covered sandstone causes serious immobility. The best climbing seasons are the spring and fall. In late fall the north face of Angel's Landing sees little sun, so prepare accordingly. After a thunderstorm it's good policy to stay off the rock for a few days — wet sandstone is very fragile.

Zion is a well-preserved wilderness area and climbers need to be aware of their impact on the high desert landscape. Pack all trash up routes and climb carefully, as the sandstone scars easily from careless piton and nut placements. The easier routes do not require either pitons or a bolt kit, and the nailing routes generally do not need any additional drilling, except perhaps at an occasional belay (some older bolts may need replacing also). A small bolt kit with 3/8-inch drills and a few 3/8-inch-by-3 1/2-inch Rawl bolts and baby angles will suffice for most Zion routes.

The north face of Angel's Landing.



— John Middendorf

A: Barry Ward and John Middendorf, 5/23 to 5/25, 1991.



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H Adams Carter
Editor, American Alpine Journal
361 Center St.
Milton, MA 02186

January 15, 1991

Dear Mr. Carter;

I would like to report the following climbs for 1991 to your fine journal:

ZION NATIONAL PARK, UTAH

Two new routes were put up on the north face of Angel's Landing. The Swiss-American Route VI, 5.10, A4, first ascent by Xaver Bongard and John Middendorf (10/91), climbs the major crack line to the left of the Lowe (original) Route and ascends directly to the summit of Angel's Landing. No bolts were drilled on pitches (14 holes for belays only). A very clean route with several very serious leads.

On the far right side of the north face of Angel's Landing (technically the center route on Scout's Landing), Days of No Future VI, 5.9, A3+, first ascent by John Middendorf and Barry Ward, climbs a overhanging loose and soft natural crack system--also no bolts or holes placed on pitches (10 holes for belays only).

Elsewhere in Zion, Conrad Anker and I climbed a new pitch at the base of the Watchman (5.9+ hands), and did the first link-up of two Zion walls in a day: Touchstone Wall and the Northeast Buttress of Angel's Landing.

COLORADO PLATEAU, ARIZONA-UTAH

In early 1991, Bill Hatcher, Barry Ward and myself climbed The Teapot, III, 5.8, an interesting 350 foot formation near Jacob's Ladder on the Navajo Reservation. In June, I made the first solo of Standing Rock by the original Kor route in 8 hours of climbing time (12 hours car to car). In October, Karen Lysett and I found a short spire to first ascend, Mr. Potato Head, I, 5.9, located on a dirt road 6.6 miles southwest of Natural Bridges National Monument on route 276. Also in October, Xaver Bongard, Melissa Wruck and I climbed the Setting Hen, II, 5.8 in the Valley of the Gods.

In November, jimmy Dunn, Betsy McKirkick, and John Middendorf climbed the first ascent of The Bear, IV, 5.10, A2, in Monument Valley. This spectacular 650 foot tower route climbs through "The Window", a large hole near the top of the formation 70 feet high and 50 feet wide, to the other side of the formation, and then to the summit. The route involves pitches of both loose and solid free-climbing and pitches of moderate aid on relatively good rock, and had previously been attempted at least three times by other parties.

Thanks for your consideration. I have some spectacular photos of the Zion routes and of the Bear (climbing through the Window) if you are interested.

Very sincerely yours,

John Middendorf

DRILLS, HANGERS, BOLTS

The Dope for Doing It Right

A treatise revealing the mysteries of bolting will necessarily be controversial. My objective, however, is to help establish a common understanding of the mechanics of bolting systems. This, combined with intelligent consideration of the environmental impacts, can only encourage progress. Of course, opinion varies on the definition of progress. Regardless, bolts should be placed with discretion, for their impact is permanent.

Bolting is inherently dangerous. The information contained within is not absolute, and it is the responsibility of the reader to personally test and evaluate all bolting gear prior to in-field use. Refer to manufacturer's instructions for specific details.

DRILLING SYSTEMS

Rawl. The Rawl system is the historical standard. Its main advantage is simplicity. It consists of a holder (with optional rubber grip), a tapered shank drill, and a drift pin (a wedge for removing drills from the holder). The Rawl uses an archaic drill numbering system for holder diameter: #12 refers to 1/4", #14 to 9/32", and #20 to 3/8". #14 Rawl holders are standard, and accept commercially available 1/4", 5/16", and 3/8" tapered-shank drills with standard #14 taper.

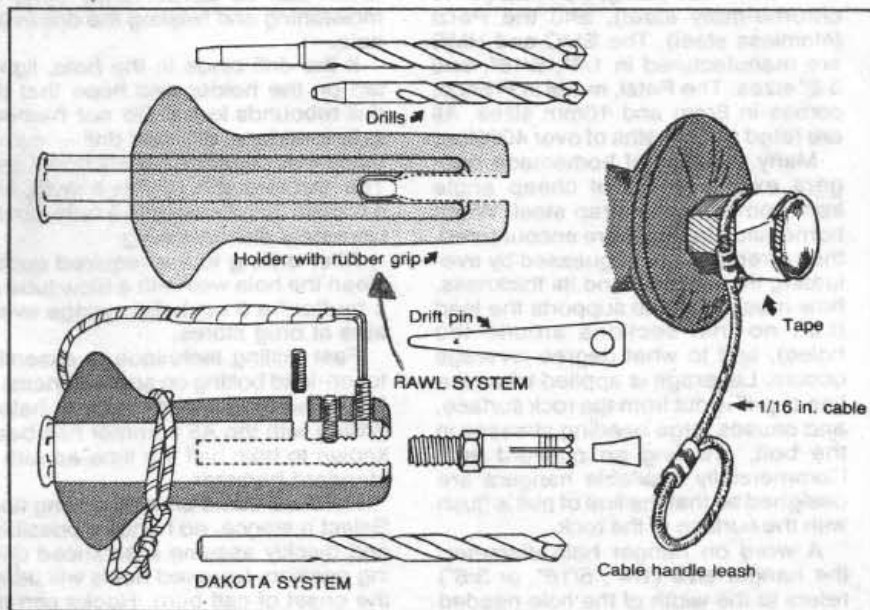
The drills press fit into the holder. Hammering the drift pin into the holder's ejection slot forces the drill out; this is called "clearing the drill." Unfortunately, drill removal is this system's major drawback. Loosening a tight press fit requires considerable hammering on the drift pin, and the drill may suddenly shoot out of the holder to become lost among the boulders.



"BAD BOLT JU-JU"

Another major problem is a lack of manufacturing consistency in the holder's heat treatment and internal taper. Too hard a heat treatment causes holders to chatter with use; too soft a treatment or too large an internal taper and the drill can become fixed deep in the holder, making it impossible to insert the drift pin.

The Rawl rubber grip slips on the holder, and works best if epoxied on. The stock Rawl drift pin is crude, so the Leeper model with its tie-in hole is preferable.



Another important feature of any drilling setup is a leash, which can be fashioned by clove hitching and taping a length of half-inch webbing to the holder. However, a leash system that doesn't wrap around the holder while drilling is preferred — such as the cable handle leash.

Dakota. The Dakota system allows for non-forcible removal of the drill from the holder. Three allenhead screws threaded in the holder are tightened flat against the drill, locking it securely in place. Lockite will help prevent loosening of the screws during use. Internal plug spacers are included and can be inserted into the holder to extend the cutting length of the drill. The properly hardened Dakota holders are shorter (preferred) than the Rawl, and come with an epoxied-on rubber grip, a leash, and a tied-on allen wrench.

Dakota offers two versatile systems: the Quad and the Quint. The Quad accepts 5/16" and 3/8" drills (5/16" shank), while the Quint takes 1/4", 5/16", and 3/8" drills (1/4" shank). Self-drives (1/4" and 5/16") can be used with both systems by inserting a threaded adapter.

The main advantages of the Dakota system are controlled removal of the drill and reliability. The disadvantage is that losing the essential set screws can disable the system.

Self-Drive. A self-drive is a combination drill and anchor (see Bolt section). There are two types of holders: threaded, which uses a bolt with internal threads; and press fit (made by Mammut), which uses chuck-end (aka snap-off), tapered-end bolts, expelled from the drill with a drift pin.

Although there are many self-drive aficionados, I feel these systems are very inefficient compared to conventional bit-and-holder systems. They are more costly (sometimes several "bits" are required to drill one hole), require greater time and effort to drill a hole, exhibit a lower strength to bolt-diameter ratio, and are limited to only self-drive anchors.

Powered. The advent of rechargeable, battery-powered hammer drills has been responsible for a recent proliferation of new routes. Although usually associated with rappel-placed routes, many traditionalists have also used them for on-lead bolt placements. One such climber altered his Bosch Bulldog, enabling him to place a bolt with one hand from stance.

These drills have a dual impact/rotary motion, and use carbide-tipped bits. Holes can be drilled in under a minute. The Bosch Bulldog (model 11213K) is the most popular hammer drill, weighing 7.7lbs (with 24V battery). On a fully charged battery, it can drill ten to 12 holes (3/8" by 3") in gran-

ite. Hilti makes a heavier (9.3lbs), more powerful version. Other manufacturers (Mikada, Porta-Cable, and Ryobi) make lighter-duty units. And for those interested in trivializing even the remote challenges, Ryobi (12 lbs) and Hilti (16lbs) make gas-powered rotary hammer drills.

DRILLS

The drill is the heart of a bolting system. Proper knowledge of drill design is essential for correct use. The following geometric variables apply:

Diameter, Length, and Shank. The diameter of a drill depends on what size bolt is being used, while length is determined by which system is employed. The shank, the end that fits into the holder, is tapered on a Rawl-type drill, while on a Dakota it is straight.

Body. The body directly effects the degree of binding that occurs while drilling. When the width of the cutting edge is decreased by side wear near the tip, the drill will start a smaller diameter hole. Binding results when the wider part, usually near the tip, jams in the hole.

Invented by Ed Leeper, the reverse taper was thought to reduce binding, compensating for side wear with its 0.3 degree taper. However, the reverse taper more readily creates wide spots 1/8" to 1/4" behind the tip. Furthermore, as these drills are sharpened, and thus shortened, they bore successively smaller holes, compounding the binding problem.

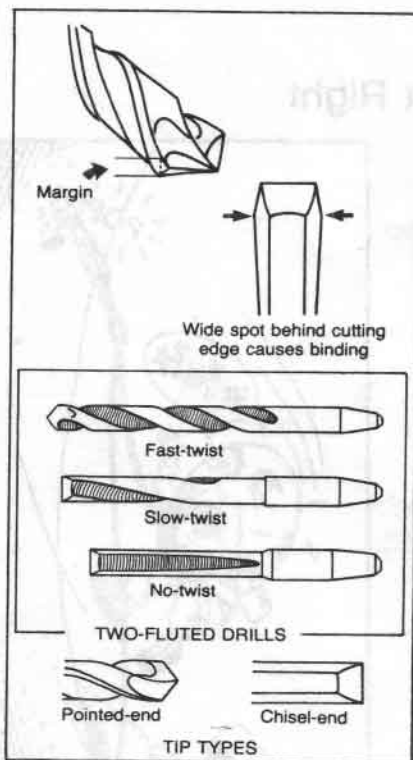
Margin. Margin, a slightly raised shoulder running lengthwise along the edge of the flute, prevents binding by reducing the effect of side wear. Visual inspection of a drill for a worn margin is a good idea to avoid the binding headache.

Flutes and Twists. Two-fluted drills are preferred over three-fluted ones, because they can be chisel-pointed for faster drilling.

I feel twisted flutes are essential for removing rock dust, which can promote binding. They convey dust out of the hole, and come in either fast twist (1 revolution per 2") or slow twist (1/2 revolution per 2").

Tip. Tips come sharpened in either a chisel-end or pointed-end. Chisel-end tips drill faster because the effective cutting edge wears more slowly than pointed-end tips. However, it is more difficult to start a hole with a chisel-end tip. They also have a greater tendency to wander, creating an oversized hole.

Three companies manufacture climbing drills: 5.10, Dakota Bolt Works, and Mountain High. 5.10 makes reverse-taper, chisel-tip drills for the Rawl holder. The 1/4" is a no-twist drill; the 5/16" and 3/8" are slow twist. The 3/8" model needs improvement — both the shank (too short to



extend past the rubber grip) and the body (too short to drill sandstone anchoring holes) need to be lengthened.

Dakota modifies industrial metal drills to fit either the Rawl or Dakota holder. These excellent drills have a constant diameter, twisted flutes, and margin.

Mountain High manufactures a 1/4" reverse-taper, slow-twist drill; it works well and is moderately priced. Drill prices range from \$10 to \$16.

HANGERS

The only three commercially made hangers available in the States are the SMC (stainless steel), the HME (4130 chrome-moly steel), and the Petzl (stainless steel). The SMC and HME are manufactured in 1/4", 5/16", and 3/8" sizes. The Petzl, made in France, comes in 8mm and 10mm sizes. All are rated at strengths of over 4000lbs.

Many varieties of homemade hangers exist — some of cheap angle iron, some of bent strap steel. When homemade hangers are encountered, their strength can be guessed by evaluating the material and its thickness, how much material supports the load (i.e., no thin sections around the holes), and to what degree leverage occurs. Leverage is applied when the line of pull is out from the rock surface, and causes large bending stresses in the bolt, creating an outward pull. Commercially available hangers are designed so that the line of pull is flush with the surface of the rock.

A word on hanger hole diameter: the hanger size (1/4", 5/16", or 3/8") refers to the width of the hole needed

for the bolt. Confusion arises with Rawldrive (split-shank) bolts because 1/4" Rawldrive buttonheads require a 5/16" hanger (or a 3/8" with 3% less strength). Likewise, a 5/16" Rawldrive requires a 3/8" hanger.

TECHNIQUE

Good drilling technique comes with practice. Experimenting with a variety of techniques and systems will naturally optimize your ability to place a good bolt. Here are the basics:

Location. Pick an area in smooth, solid rock, at least ten bolt diameters away from the nearest fracture or edge, considering at the same time the line of pull and convenience for clipping. Optimize the height of the bolt with ease of drilling, which is efficient at 2/3 of your maximum reach. Test for exfoliated or hollow sections with a hammer. The hanger must sit flush with the rock, so small nubbins should be chipped away. However, beware that excessive pounding will weaken the rock.

Starting and Drilling the Hole. To begin the hole, use the drill as a chisel, cross-hatching to create a shallow circular indentation.

The hole must be drilled perpendicular to the surface of the rock, so it is important to maintain a steady drilling angle to avoid an oversized or non-perpendicular hole. Turn the drill at least 1/8 of a revolution between every hammer blow, and distribute the total number of hits at each orientation evenly with at least 180° rotation.

As the hole progresses, grip the holder loosely, maintaining a steady angle and constant rotation, and allow the drill to rebound slightly (1/4" or so) after each hit. The resulting pneumatic effect helps displace dust, which otherwise slows drilling and encourages binding. Also, periodically remove the drill and purge the dust, which can be conveniently done by moistening and twisting the drill in the hole.

If the drill binds in the hole, lightly tap on the holder and hope that the drill rebounds loose. Do *not* hammer side-to-side on a bound drill — sometimes even normal use will break one. The "unbreakable drill" is a myth, and a broken bit midway into a hole can be ultimately disheartening.

After drilling to the required depth, clean the hole well with a blow tube or a "puffer," a 3 oz. baby syringe available at drug stores.

Fast drilling technique is essential for on-lead bolting on small stances. A heavy, well-balanced hammer helps; drilling with the A5 hammer has been known to take half the time as with a standard hammer.

Here are some on-lead drilling tips. Select a stance, no hands if possible, and quickly assume a balanced drilling position. Lowered heels will delay the onset of calf burn. Hooks can be



used to unweight the rope, or for aid. Maintain a relaxed, steadfast attitude, and avoid procrastination. Resting frequently and shifting positions are inefficient. Difficult on-lead bolt placement is an uncelebrated art, its perfection requiring boldness, adventurous desire, and repudiation of the spineless, top-down technique.

BOLTS

Nearly all bolts used for rock climbing are designed for industrial anchoring in masonry and concrete, except the HME and Metolius which are designed specifically for rock climbing. There are over 100 masonry fastener companies in the U.S., the main ones being the Rawlplug Company (New Rochelle, NY), Star Expansion Company (Mountainville, NY) and USE Diamond (York, PA). Other suppliers include Redhead-Phillips, Wej-it, and Hilti.

Climbing bolts can be divided into three functional classes. A hammer-in bolt is pounded into the hole; a torque-type bolt is placed in the hole, then torqued with a wrench; and a glue-in bolt is a threaded rod glued into an oversized hole.

Glue-in bolts are common in Europe. Their strength is that of the bond between the glue and the rock, which is sometimes stronger than the rock itself. Glue-ins are also resistant to weathering and should be strongly considered by the top-down "creationists" who can afford the setting time required — 10-20 minutes at 68°F. Polyester resin glue is available in convenient capsule form, such as the Rawl Chem-Stud capsule. These can be simply placed in the hole and mixed while setting the anchor rod with a rotary hammer drill.

Hammer-in Bolts. These bolts come in two styles. Rawldrives have split-shank halves that compress, exerting an outward spring force against the walls of the hole. Friction between the bolt and the rock converts the outward force into a resisting lateral force. Wedge-type hammer-ins utilize a wedge driven into the base of the bolt, expanding its sides outward.

Rawldrives. Rawldrives have been the most common rock climbing bolt. However, they fail with time due to "creep," an engineering concept which describes a time-dependent deformation of material under a constant force.

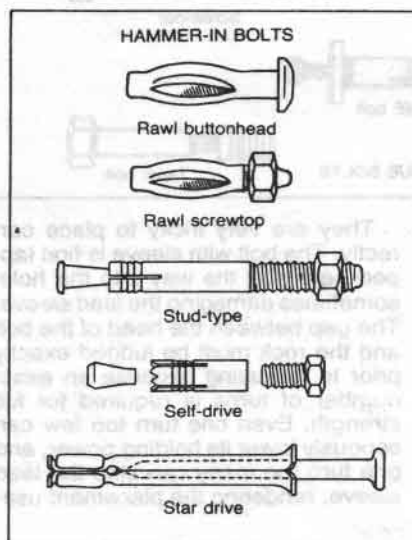
Rawldrives are adequate for hard rock, but not recommended for sandstone. Sandstone deforms too easily, and the split shanks don't compress sufficiently; also, the coefficient of friction between steel and sandstone is low due to thin shear planes, and Rawldrives depend on a high coefficient of friction.

They come in a buttonhead and a screw-top design. The screw-top, which must be placed with the nut pre-threaded on, is weaker due to the threads.

When placing a Rawldrive, always orient the split-shanks perpendicular to the line of pull. To prevent cratering, tap the bolt in slowly until the wide part of the shank is in. Do not continue to pound on the bolt if it bottoms out.

Wedge-Type Hammer-Ins. These come in both stud-types and self-drives. Holes for these bolts must be drilled to an exact depth. Stud-types are externally threaded, strong in the 3/8" size, and convenient to place. Self-drives are internally threaded, weak considering the large hole diameter, and difficult to properly place flush with the rock.

Common machine bolts can also be used for rock anchoring, most notably as a cheap and easy aid rivet placed in a 1/2"-deep hole. Proper hole sizing is



very critical when using these because they rely on an interference fit for security. Coarse-thread machine bolts (5/16") are secure in a hole hand-drilled with an exact 0.275" diameter drill. Even a hole oversized by a few thousandths of an inch can render the placement useless; obviously, they are not recommended for sandstone. Grade 5 hexagonal head bolts are the best, grade 2 material is too weak, and grade 8 steel is too hard to ensure the required meshing of threads. Aluminum machine bolts hold body weight, and can be the ticket for aid ladders on remote big walls.

Baby Angles. A half-inch baby angle hammered into a 3/8" hole is a commonly used anchor. In fact, they are currently the only anchor suitable for soft sandstone. Desert rat Ron Olevsky certifies that baby angles are "so good that long after the rock has crumbled and eroded into dust, they'll be hanging up in space..." However, proper placement of baby angles is complex, requiring the use of glue and several drills of varying diameter (1/4", 3/8", and 1/2"). Rock quality is the key factor determining this anchor's reliability.

Miscellaneous Hammer-Ins. Star Drives are sleeve- or shield-type bolts, but are barely deserving of mention because they are expensive and relatively weak. Drop-ins (not shown) are similar to the self-drive bolts, but instead have an internal wedge which is set with a special driving tool. They are sometimes used for aid.

Torque Bolts. Torque bolts can be divided into two classes: pull-type, which pull a cone into the expansion section; and push-type, which pushes the expansion section outward. The expansion section can either be a sleeve, or the body of the bolt.

Rawl Bolt. The 5-piece Rawl bolt is in the pull-type class, and is one of the best available. Pluses of the Rawl bolt include high strength, versatility (good for a variety of rock types including some sandstones), and foolproofness (over-torquing is easy to avoid). For full strength, the Rawl bolt is torqued until the blue plastic sleeve starts to compress, which is apparent when the torquing force becomes constant (generally after 3 or 4 turns).

Metolius Bolt. Metolius manufactures a 3/8" welded-eye bolt with a three-piece (bolt, wedge, sleeve) pull-type construction. The bolt is made from high-strength (4130) steel rod, bent and welded to form the eye. Structural welds are susceptible to corrosion, hide flaws, and locally disturb the base material's mechanical properties. Nevertheless, these bolts have tested out well and are the best of the hangerless bolts on the market.

Miscellaneous Torque Bolts. Screw-outs are a common torque-bolt, available in stainless steel.

BOLTS

Type	Manufacturer	Size ¹	Price ²	Rock Type ³	Function Index ⁴	Strength Index ⁵	Manufacturer's Listed Strengths ⁶ (in pounds)
HAMMER-IN Rawldrive	Rawl	1/4", 5/16", (3/8")	1/4"-.\$.43 5/16"-.\$.58	HR	medium	medium	1/4" - 2050(+) pullout, 2230(+) shear 5/16" - 3500 pullout, 4850(+) shear 3/8" - 5010 pullout, 7800 (b) shear
Stud-type	Rawl, Star	(1/4"), 3/8"	1/4"-.\$.53 3/8"-.\$.85	HR, MR	high	medium	1/4" - 2300 pullout, 1800 shear 3/8" - 3400 pullout, 4100 shear
Self-drive	Rawl, Star	7/16", 15/32"	1/4"-.\$.68 5/16"-.\$.91	HR, MR	low	low	1/4" - 2710 pullout 5/16" - 3225 pullout, 4300 shear
Machine Bolt	—	many	\$.05-.10	HR	low	medium	A grade 5, 1 1/4" long, coarse thread machine bolt placed in a #14 diameter hole tested to 3700 shear.
Baby Angle	Chouinard	1/2" angle for 3/8" hole	\$4.35	SR	low	high*	—
Dryvins	SMC Star	(1/4", 3/8")	\$1.85	NR	low	low	A 3/8" x 2" Stardrive tested to 2000
TORQUE Rawl-Bolt	Rawl	3/8"	\$.90	HR, MR	high	high	3/8" x 2" - 4840 pullout, 7875 (b) shear 3/8" x 3" - 5590 pullout, 8155 shear 3/8" x 3 1/2" - 5310 pullout, 9055 (b) shear
Metolius	Metolius	3/8"	\$6.50	HR, MR	high	medium	3/8" x 2" - 4000 pullout, 4500 (-) shear 3/8" x 3" - 6000 pullout, 7500 (-) shear
HME	HME	1/4"	\$6.50	HR	high	medium	n/a
Taperbolt	USE Diamond	1/4", 3/8"	1/4"-.\$.99 3/8"-.\$.152	HR	low	medium	1/4" - 1666 pullout (-), 2425 (+) shear 3/8" - 4030 pullout, 7177 (b) shear
Screw-out	Rawl, Star, USE, others	1/4", 3/8"	1/4"-.\$.42 3/8"-.\$.75	HR	medium	medium	1/2" - 2700 pullout, 2600 (-) shear 3/8" - 4390 pullout, 4320 (+) shear
Sleeve-type	Rawl, Star, USE, others	(1/4"), 5/16", 3/8"	5/16"-.\$.39 3/8"-.\$.70	HR, MR	medium	low	1/4" - 1650 pullout, 1550 shear 5/16" - 2400 pullout, 2300 shear 3/8" - 4100 pullout, 3020 (+) shear

¹ () indicates a non-recommended size

² For 1/4" x 1 1/2" or 3/8" x 3"

³ HR=hard rock, MR=medium rock, SR=soft rock

⁴ Function index includes versatility, foolproofness, and ease of placement.

⁵ Strength index considers longevity, relative bolt diameter, and assumes proper placement.
* sandstone only

⁶ Manufacturer's tests are in 3000-5000 psi strength concrete; (+) = verified by test, (-) = test strengths were less, and (b) = hanger broke first

Sleeve anchors (not pictured), such as the Rawl Lok-Bolt, utilize a wedge which is pulled into a body-length sleeve. Wej-it makes a bolt (not recommended) with two triangular wedges connected to long thin rods running the length of the bolt.

Taper Bolts. Taper bolts, manufactured by USE Diamond, have been a popular alternative to 1/4" Rawl drives. They are a push-type bolt; a tapered, threaded section on the bolt is screwed into a lead sleeve, expanding the sleeve outward.

less. Many experienced bolters (even those familiar with the taper bolt) have botched placements. Worst of all, a botched taper bolt is difficult to detect. Furthermore, a taper bolt's pull out strength is minimal, and despite a recently improved lead sleeve design, these bolts are not recommended.

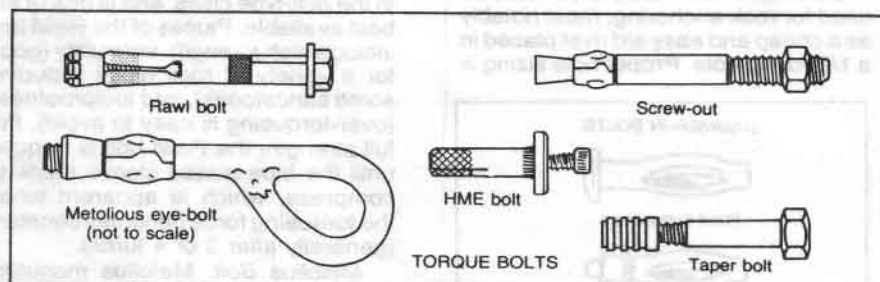
USE Diamond also makes a 3/8" taper eye bolt. It is poorly designed for shear; pull forces with the round eye design are away from the surface of the rock, causing excessive leverage.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Selecting a suitable bolt for a particular application requires knowledge of the mechanical properties of the anchoring medium. General recommendations are difficult.

Solid rock anchors exert a large anchoring force with not much expansion. Medium rock anchors must exert the same degree of anchoring force, but with more expansion and so on as the rock gets softer. Anchoring force must continue with time, and compensate for possible rock decomposition. Careful consideration of the bolt's anchoring mechanism will indicate its compatibility with a given rock type.

In general, 1/4" bolts should not be



HME Bolt. HME manufactures a stainless-steel, push-type bolt. The allen screw, with only one full turn, expands the trisected body outward. Loosening the allen screw allows removal of the bolt, which can be reused. Although exorbitantly priced at \$6.50, the HME bolt, outfitted with a thumb screw, would be an extremely handy tool to fill missing bolt holes such as those often found on El Cap's Boot Flake.

They are very tricky to place correctly. The bolt with sleeve is first tapped nearly all the way into the hole, sometimes damaging the lead sleeve. The gap between the head of the bolt and the rock must be judged exactly prior to torquing because an exact number of turns is required for full strength. Even one turn too few can seriously lower its holding power, and one turn too many can strip the lead sleeve, rendering the placement use-

used as a general protection bolt, and should only be considered for special applications where speed is critical and security secondary.

A 5/16" is only available as a Rawl-drive and in weaker sleeve types. The 5/16" Rawl-drive comes only in 1 1/2" length, limiting its use to hard rock.

The best bolts for free climbing are 3/8", and are available in a variety of styles. The Rawl bolt is a good all-around bolt, as is the 3/8" stud-type hammer-in. These bolts work well in medium (or better) quality rock.

Personal experimentation with bolts is advised. A non-definitive estimate of a bolt's strength can be obtained with the aid of a "funkness device," a strong, swaged cable assembly (3' to 4' long, with end loops). Clipping one end of the cable to the bolt, the other end to a heavy hammer, and swinging hard can create incredible forces (and tendonitis). Commercially made hangers can bend or even break using this test, indicating the bolt is good.

Corrosion and fatigue are factors which weaken a bolt with time. Fixed anchors should be stainless steel, and possibly sealed with glue, especially in more porous rock. When sealing or gluing any bolt, do *not* use epoxy. Recent research indicates "that steel corrosion caused by contact with epoxy occurs" (*Machine Design Trade Magazine*). Furthermore, epoxy has low shock absorbing properties. Polyester resins are better in all aspects.

Testing. Static strength tests of 74 bolts were performed last fall in Yosemite granite. Results of the test are tabulated.

The author encourages independent testing. A reliable test rig can be constructed with a hydraulic cylinder (push/pull type) and a pressure gauge. The hydraulic pressure and pull force are linearly related.

The hydraulic test rig reveals the static strength of an item. Climbing forces are quasi-static (loading rates can be static, quasi-static, or dynamic). The quasi-static strength of common structural materials is not much less than the static strength, so the static strength test gives applicable results.

— John Middendorf IV

Manufacturers

S.10 Company
P.O. Box 1390
Glendale, CA 91209
(818) 768-3068

Dakota Bolt Works
1801 Centre Street
Rapid City, S.D. 57701
(605) 348-9109

HME
360 Chestnut #5
Carlsbad, CA 92008
(619) 434-6498

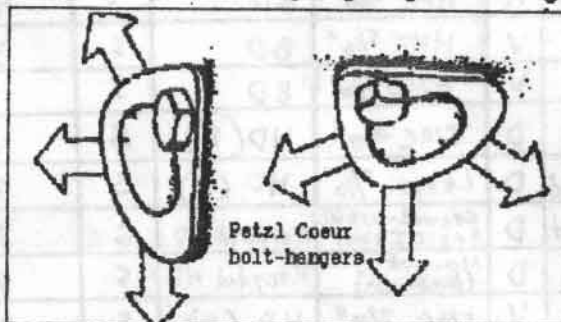
Metolius
63225 Lyman Place
Bend, OR 97701
(503) 328-7585

Petzl/PMI
Box 803
La Fayette, GA 30728
1-800-282-7673

SMC
12880 Northrup Way
Bellevue, WA 98005
1-800-426-6251

Addendum

New Products: Petzl has a new bolt hanger, the Coeur, which innovates a new standard in bolt hangers. Existing hanger types are well designed to minimize leverage for a shear pull, but pry on the bolt for a straight outward pull load. The Petzl hanger is designed such that for any angle of pull, leverage is minimized.



The Coeur hanger is available in two sizes: 10mm (model #P84) for 3/8" bolts, and 8mm (model #P86). Metolius has a look-alike version, with similar non-leveraging characteristics (no further info available).

Update on bolts: The Rawlbolt is proving *not* to be as foolproof as originally thought. Rock-dust sometimes gets into the threads where the cone attaches, and the cone may seize on the bolt, disabling further expansion. Continuing to tighten the bolt after this happens will cause the bolt to spin in its hole, confirming a useless bolt. For best results, make sure the hole is very clean before placing the Rawlbolt. Also, Rawlbolts generally require 8 to 4 half-turns for full strength, rather than the previously stated 8 to 4 full-turns (stop torquing when the blue plastic sleeve starts to compress).

On Taperbolts: Taperbolts aren't recommended due to ease of "botchment". Botched taperbolt placements may be minimized with the use of an accurate torque wrench, and a spacer to determine initial clearance. Proper placement requires exact concordance with manufacturer's (USE Diamond) recommendations on torque.

Epoxy Update: Bob Harn from Seattle has clarified epoxy use with bolts. The corrosion that occurs with epoxied-in bolts is due to crevice corrosion (as opposed to a chemical reaction between the epoxy and the bolt). Crevice corrosion occurs when the epoxy cracks due to thermal and/or shock loads, allowing water and other contaminants to collect in the cracks and initiate crevice corrosion which occurs in the oxygen starved environments. Epoxy has little resilience; a more resilient glue (like polyester resin) is required for rock climbing applications.

Bolt Failure: The pull-out strength of a bolt (as opposed to its shear strength) is a very important factor of a bolt's overall strength, especially in the 1/4" and 5/16" sizes (hanger failure usually occurs first for 3/8" bolts). When tested in shear, a bolt crushes the rock around its hole in the direction of pull, and the bolt bends. Further pulling on the bent bolt results in both a shear force and a pull-out force. Most 1/4" bolts pull out of their hole rather than break when tested in shear.

Rawl 1/4" split-bolt Test Results



Test Number	Bolt type, & length	①	Hanger	Hole ②	FD ③	Strength (lb) ⑤	Failure Mode ④	Comments
1	1/4" Buttonhead	H	HME 5/16"	HD (J.B.)	S	3614 -	BP, HD	
2	1/4" "	D	HME 5/16"	HD (J.B.)	S	3275 1	BP, HD	popped out 1/2 way pulled out at 2814
3	1/4" "	V	HME 5/16"	HD (J.B.)	S	3283 1	BP, HD	
4	1/4" Buttonhead	H	HME 5/16"	BD	S	4238 -	HB(e)	
5	1/4" "	H	HME 5/16"	BD	S	4010 -	HB(e)	hanger broke, bolt then pulled out by hand
6	1/4" "	V	HME 5/16"	BD	S	3274 1	BP, HD	
7	1/4" "	V	HME 5/16"	BD	S	4223 1	HB(e)	rebroke at 1526 lb after hanger broke
8	1/4" Buttonhead	D	SMC 3/8"	HD (D)	S	3050 1	BP, HD	
9	1/4" Buttonhead	D	Leeper 5/16"	HD (D)	S	2858 1	BP	
10	1/4" Buttonhead	D	Second-used Angle Iron	Recycled HD	S	2658	BP -	
11	1/4" "	D	No-gud (Aluminum)	Recycled HD	S	2566	BP -	
12	1/4" Buttonhead	V	SMC 3/8"	HD (D)	S	2034 1	BP, HD (slight)	Intentionally placed so - placed only 1/2 way in
13	1/2" Buttonhead	H	HME 5/16"	HD (J.B.)	S	4574	HB(e)	rebroke at 1723 lb after hanger broke
14	1/2" "	H	SMC 3/8"	HD (D)	S	4571	HB(e)	Bolt pulled out by hand after test
15	1/2" Buttonhead	V	HME 5/16"	BD	S	3242	BB (mid-way), HD	
16	1/2" "	H	HME 5/16"	BD	S	5163	HB(e)	rebroke at 3118 lb and 1446 lb after
17	1/2" Buttonhead	V	SMC 3/8"	BD	S	3518	BB (mid-way), HD	
18	1/2" "	V	SMC 3/8"	BD	S	3360	BB (mid-way), HD	Bolt pulled out first 1/2 way
19	1/2" "	H	HME 5/16"	BD	S	3174	BP, HD	
20	1/2" "	H	HME 5/16"	BD	S	4099	HB(e), HD	Bolt pulled partially out, then HB.
21	1/2" Screwtop	H	Leeper 1/4"	HD (D)	S	3534	BP, HD	Rock failed at 2858 lb
22	1/2" Screwtop	H	SMC 1/4"	HD (D)	S	2846	BP	
23	2" short-thread screw-top	H	HME 1/4"	BD	S	4854	BB (threads) and HB(e)	Hanger broke - pulled through...
24	2" long-thread screw-top	H	SMC 1/4"	BD	S	3162	BB (threads)	Bunk bolts - cannot be placed w/out deforming
25	1/4" Buttonhead	H	HME 5/16"	BD	P	1258	BP	Cracked hole in placement
26	1/4" "	H	SMC 3/8"	BD	P	1762	BP, HD	
27	1/4" "	H	SMC 3/8"	BD	P	1303	BP, HD	
28	1/2" Buttonhead	H	SMC 3/8"	BD	P	2363	BP, HD	Hanger bent @ 1120 lbs
29	1/2" "	H	SMC 3/8"	BD	P	3875	BP, HD	Hanger bent @ 2538 lbs
30	1/2" "	H	HME 5/16"	BD	P	2414	BP, HD	Popped first finally pulled at 1462 lbs
31	1/2" "	H	SMC 3/8"	BD	P	3182	BP, HD	

Notes:

① Orientation of Splits

H = horizontal
V = vertical
D = diagonal

② Hole

HD = hand-drilled (w/ Dakota 1/4" bit)
BD = Bosch-drilled

J.B. = Jim Bridwell
D = Deuce

③ Force Direction

S = shear P = pull-out

⑤ Subtract 200-250 lbs from all forces ←

④ Failure Mode

BP = Bolt pulled
HB = Hanger broke
e = at eye
c = at clip-in
HD = hanger deformed
BB = bolt broke at threads at head mid-way

ave 1/4" = 3281

ave 1/2" = 3874

Notes

① Chopped: from powerfingers

Many Thanks to Hal Murray, John Dill, Dimitri Barton, Kurt Smith, and Jim Bridwell for their help and participation in this test.

Test #

Test Info

subtract 200-250 lbs from forces

Test #	Bolt type, description		Hanger	Strength		Failure Mode	Comments
	Miscellaneous						
	5/16"	Rawl, Horiz. orient.	SMC 3/8"	5179		bolt pulled	
	"	"	"	4998		hanger broke	
	5/16"	Self Drive (STAR)	SMC 3/8"	4630		Rock crumbled, sleeve popped and broke at threads.	
	3/8" Bolts			weld broke	ultimate strength		
1	Metolius long	placed w/ 3-4 turns ~25 ft-lbs torque	-	6062	5866	eye opened	placed w/ 1/4" clearance from rock
2	" "		-	6571	77500	" "	
3	Metolius short		-	4219		BB (threads)	
4	" "		-	5902		BB (")	
5	Rawl 3/8" screwtop		SMC 3/8"	6838		HB	Bolt barely phased.
6	Taper 3/8" 2 1/2" long		SMC 3/8"	5474		HB	Bolt was in mint replaceable
7	3/8" Screw-out ~2-3"		SMC 3/8"	4618		BB (threads)	catalog
8	Sleeved Rawl 3 1/2-4 turns ~2-3" cheap sleeve		SMC 3/8"	3642		BB (threads)	check catalog for type
9	Hammer-in type-long		SMC 3/8"	4530		BB (threads)	
10	Hammer-in type-short		SMC 3/8"	5427		BB (threads)	
11	Taper Eye-Bolt 3/8"		-	4819		BP w/sleeve	Bent @ 2538 - pulled out in stages
12	Short-sleeved ^{star} drive		SMC 3/8"	2302		BP in pieces	semi-botched in placement
13	Rawl bolt - short ^{2 1/4" max tighten}		SMC 3/8"	5974		HB (e)	Good Bolt!
14	Stardrive - botched long		SMC 3/8"	2644		BP in pieces	botched (1/2 way in)

notes: lengths of bolt must be checked (catalog)

Metolius bolts are 4130 steel HT to RC 38/42

Photos of ^{Metolius} bolts at noted strengths 5206 (BW), 6558 (color)

Test #	Bolt type, description	Hanger	Hole	FD	Strength	Failure Mode	Comments
<u>Machine Bolts</u>							Test #1-5 - all hangers placed +
1	Grade 5, 1 1/4", coarse thread	SMC 3/8"	#14	S	4006	pulled out	
2	Grade 2, 1 1/4", "	SMC 3/8"	#14	S	2979	sheared at nut	
3	Aluminum, 1", "	SMC 3/8"	#14	S	1658	sheared at nut	
4	Grade 5, 3/4", "	SMC 3/8"	#14	S	2954	pulled out	
5	Grade 5, 3/4", "	RP key hole	#14	S	2718	pulled out ^{HO}	unbelievable
6	Grade 5, 1 1/4", "	SMC 3/8"	1/4"	S	2842	pulled out	placed 1/2 way in, as is
7	" " "	SMC 3/8"	1/4"	S	1714	"	placed 1/2 way in, threads missing
<u>Taper Bolts</u>							
1	1 1/4" New style, 4 1/2 turns (K)	SMC 3/8"	BD	S	3066	BB (midway)	spinner
2	1 1/4" New, 5 turns (K)	SMC 1/4"	BD	S	4668	BB (head)	tight
3	1 1/4" New, 2 turns (K)	SMC 1/4"	BD	S	2950	BP w/sleeve	Tight, intentionally placed w/ few turns
4	1 1/2" Old, 5 turns (K)	SMC 1/4"	BD	S	3890	BP, sleeve left at hole edge	Tight, rock broke at ~2000 lbs
5	1 1/4" Old, 5 turns (K)	SMC 1/4"	BD	S	2798	BP, sleeve disintegrated	• tight
6	1 1/2" Old, 6 turns (K)	SMC 1/4"	#14	S	3166	BP, sleeve @ hole edge	Rock broke first, pulled @ 3146
7	1 1/4" New, 6 turns (K)	SMC 1/4"	HD (kurt)	S	4682	BB (head), bolt pulled out, too	Rock broke, then bolt broke @ 3200
8	1 1/4" Old, 4 turns (D)	SMC 1/4"	BD	P	934	BP w/broken sleeve	Lame
9	1 1/4" Old, 4 turns (D)	SMC 1/4"	BD	P	770	BP w/broken sleeve	"
<u>Miscellaneous 1/4"</u>							
1	Cassin wedge	—	BD	S	1306	BP	1/2 way - in
2	~1" Hammer in	SMC 3/8"	BD	S	2180	BB (threads)	catalog rating?
3	~1 1/4" screw-out	SMC 3/8"	BD	S	1938	BB (threads)	} see catalog for types
4	"	"	DD	S	2076	"	
5	"	"	BD	S	1838	"	
6	"	"	BD	S	2242	"	
7	1/4" Stardrive	"	BD	S	1384	Hanger pulled - too small	Hanger too big
8	long Z-mac	SMC 3/8"	BD	S	1550	BB	} Bolts pulled out first, then sheared. Nail pulled out w/ head.
9	short Z-mac	"	BD	S	1355	BB	
10	long pin thing (this is a blind rivet)	"	BD	S	1391	BB	

the giraffe route el trono blanco, mexico

Without a doubt, North America has the finest selection of big walls in the world. From Alaska to Mexico, these walls encompass the extremes in terms of size, remoteness, and prevalent weather conditions. From the idyllic granite walls of Yosemite to the flawless sandstone cliffs of Zion to the bizarre and intimidating Black Canyon, all levels of commitment and challenges abound.

Early in the winter of 1993, I travelled with Jeff Hollenbaugh to Baja, Mexico and the 1,600-foot granite wall of El Trono Blanco – pictured right. Except for an ancient article by Scott Baxter called Poor Man's Patagonia, published in *Climbing* in 1974, little information has appeared on this area. Actually called Canyon Tajo, it is like a smaller version of Joshua Tree with many great crags found among the granular exfoliating domes. The largest of these is El Trono Blanco, which extends into the Laguna Salada valley and whose big wall faces away from Canyon Tajo, requiring a careful exploratory-type drive into the area, and then a hellish descent to the base of the wall.

Jeff and I were considering a new route on the face, although neither of us had ever seen it. I had sketchy information from various people, several widely varying maps, and topos of some of the routes – the Pan American, the South Face, and the Happy Hooker. We knew of the Giraffe only from a speculative line drawn on the photo from Baxter's article from someone who had once attempted the Pan Am route, and that John Long, Billy Westbay, and Hugh Burton had established it sometime in the early 1970s.

It took us two full day's driving on rough 4WD roads to find the area, which required many miles of wandering lost on unmarked roads. Our maps, at least a decade old, were of no use, as they



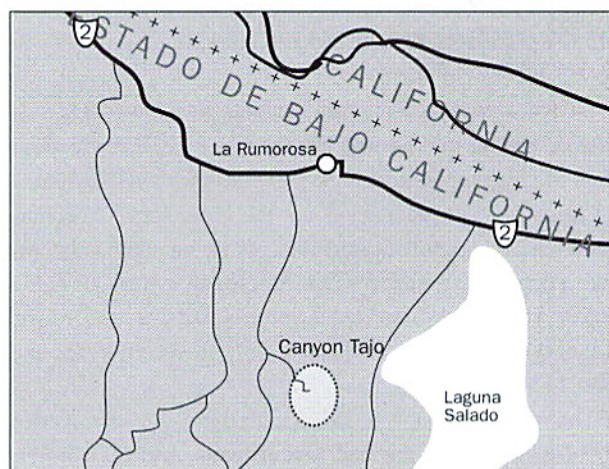
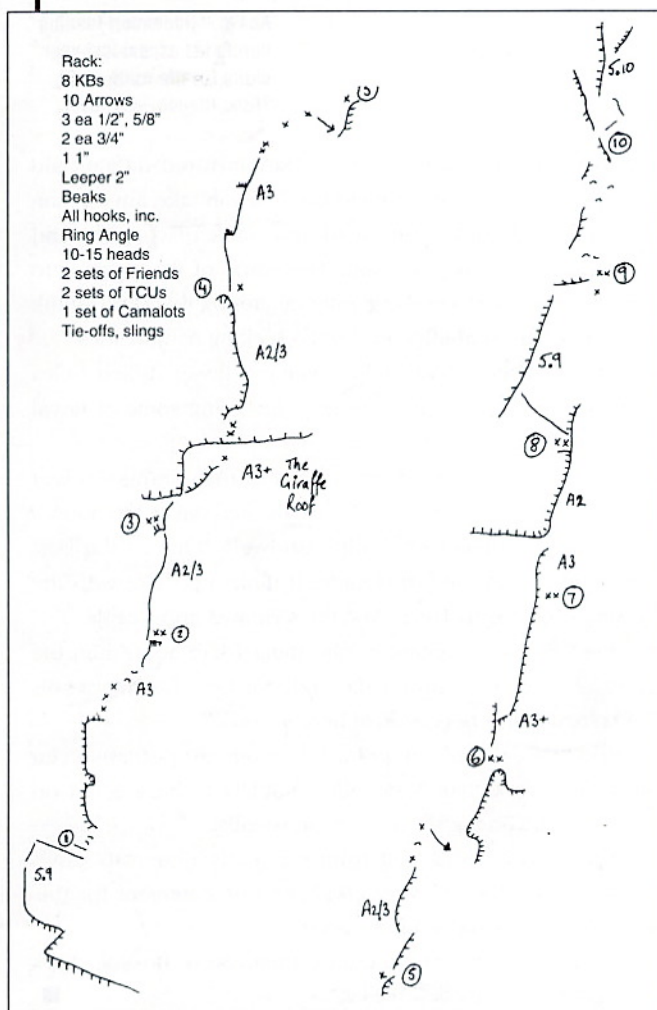
MIDDENDORF

referred to non-existent roads and signs, and long-changed temporal features like 'fence' and 'burned-out area'. After solving the puzzle and finding the domes, the approach to the base was just as much a mystery, and after picking one of many gullies just because it 'felt right', we loaded up our gear and provisions for five days and went for it.

The descent was hell on Earth. It requires wicked bushwhacking down vertical gullies thrashing around in a maze of monster-sized boulders, with huge cliff drop-offs encountered at every turn. Each section of the way had to be first explored without the mondo haulbags.

After a full day of thrashing, we made it, luckily finding water there, and scoped out the routes for the first time. The Pan American is an obvious corner system up the centre of the face. It looks like it will eventually go all free. The Giraffe is on the left and steeper side of the wall, and is the only viable line on the east face of El Trono Blanco, standing alone in a sea of granite. We abandoned plans for a new route for an ascent of the Giraffe.

Each pitch of the route is excellent nailing, generally difficult – A3 and harder – and goes through some spectacular features and roofs. We were amazed at how the natural features linked up to produce a continuous route. Below the top, as I was leading an aid corner that was becoming progressively more and more awkward and was leading into a wet and ugly section, I was about to yell to Jeff that we finally had a stinker pitch when I was suddenly able to step around the corner on a thank-god, horizontal ledge to moderate free climbing. The moment typified the climbing on the Giraffe – intimidating and improbable from afar, but all there up close. When we finally escaped, the non-stop adventure of the past week was soon celebrated with some fine Mexican beers.





Above: Middendorf leading during his ascent last year of the Giraffe route on El Trono Blanco – see over.

to make not only the pitches difficult but the belays technically difficult to set up as well. It's like Bonatti said, bolts are the murder of the impossible.'

Bolts added to the Kali Yuga by Bill Russell and Pete Takeda during the first ascent of their new route the Vodka Putsch which joins the last leads of Kali, upset Middendorf:

'They added over 25 holes,' says Middendorf. 'They bolted around this flake that Walt freed, but the worst tragedy is that the last pitch – which Walt led – went completely no holes and it overhung possibly 50 feet in 75 of climbing. It was sketchy A3 pins in these horizontal layers. It was really strenuous and really awkward. It was a masterpiece. They shouldn't have been on it. They should have done some other variation where they could've drilled their way up.'

Takeda defends himself by saying he drilled only one bathook placement. Russell did add numerous rivets but was unavailable for comment.

'I have a pretty clear conscience as to what I did,' said Takeda, adding that he was not leading or calling the shots when the rivets were added. 'I can't speak for anybody else.'

Chiselled head placements are the other major Yosemite trend that Middendorf doesn't like. While he admits his new route Flight of the Albatross on El Capitan has about half a dozen chiselled head placements, it's a technique Middendorf has used only twice, only in recent years and doesn't endorse.

'The reason I have a problem with them' he says, 'is that they are easiest for the first ascent team. And then it gets

trashed for subsequent ascents. Manufactured difficult aid climbing is just bullshit. Obviously you can take any section of blank rock and chisel head and hook placements and make it as hard as you want. The name of the game is to find the natural A5 climbing without altering the rock. I think that's what all climbing's all about – seeking natural lines.'

Great Trango, incidentally, averages fewer drilled holes per foot than most 'natural' lines – including some of Royal Robbins' routes – in Yosemite.

'He's really gone a long way with that Trango Tower route,' says Shipley. 'He's really accelerated out of the norm.'

'A great achievement,' adds Bridwell. 'One of the best achievements in the last decade. It ranks up there with the south face of Cerro Torre. And the style was impeccable.'

'But,' Bridwell continues, 'the thing I like about him the most – and I don't give a damn about how he climbs – is he's a really nice person. Real honest, too.'

Bridwell's comments point to something perhaps even more legendary than Middendorf's ability to beak it out on desperate A5 horror shows – his personality.

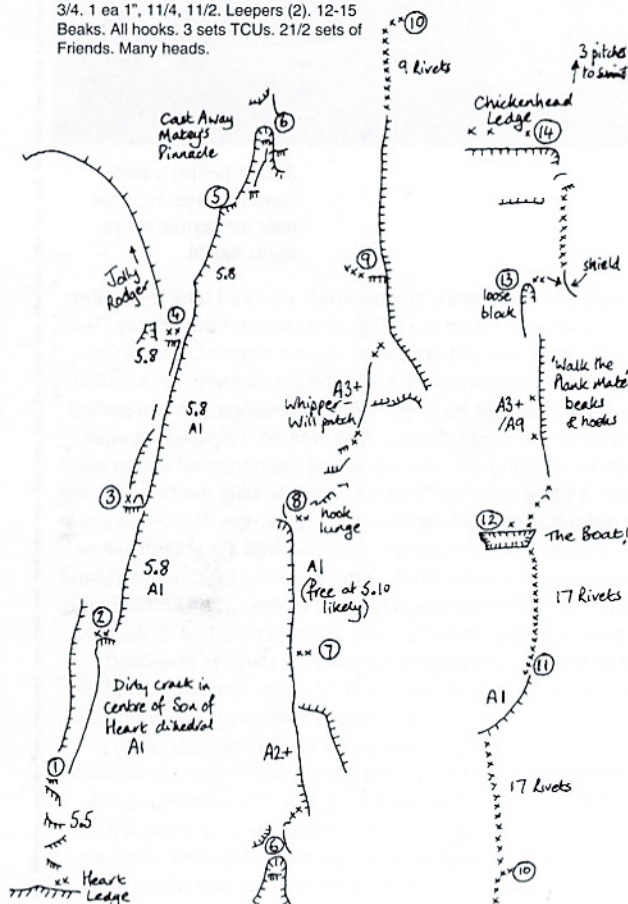
'Has anyone told you John's a really generous guy?' Shipley asks. Nearly every climber's first comment for this article concerns Middendorf's generosity.

'God bless John,' says longtime friend Steve Bosque. 'He's one guy who really deserves it.'

flight of the albatross el capitan, yosemite

I had pieced this route together over years of scoping out sections. In the mid 1980s, I had seen the middle part, 450 feet of good cracks rising from Grey Ledges well into the Shield Headwall, to where it blanks out for 220 feet. Several pitches below Chickenhead ledge – 500 feet below the summit – a huge canoe-shaped flake which seemed to defy gravity was attached to the headwall, and from there, a clearly visible crack went to Chickenhead Ledge. When I climbed the Salathé for the second time just prior to this ascent, I saw a 500-foot crack system which was not part of any other route splitting the centre of the

Rack: 10KB. 15 LA. 3-4 ea 1/2, 5/8, 2-3 ea 3/4, 1 ea 1", 11/4, 11/2. Leepers (2). 12-15 Beaks. All hooks. 3 sets TCUs. 21/2 sets of Friends. Many heads.



100-foot-wide dihedral which forms the bottom part of the famous Heart formation on El Cap. Final observation with a telescope revealed a flake system spitting the blank section on the Shield headwall. All in all, it turned out to be 180 feet of blank rock requiring rivet ladders in 1,400 feet of new climbing. El Capitan, with over 60 routes and variations, is so criss-crossed with lines that it is hard to imagine squeezing more in without extensive drilling, and since the last really good lines were bagged in the late 1980s, new routes have required more and more drilling through large blank sections to link natural features. Many new routes on El Capitan have required over 100 holes to complete, though many have required fewer – the Atlantic Ocean Wall, for example, required 58 new holes for bolts and rivets. I estimated that we could do this new route with less than 75 holes total, so my ethical reservations were resolved.

Will Oxx and I began in fine spring weather, fixing up to Heart Ledges and hauling gear up. Like most big wall routes, this one had its most difficult moments getting started the first few days.

Will dropped my Swiss army knife the first night from Heart Ledge, and I went into a foul mood. The pitches from Heart to Grey were largely filled with dirt and mud, making for some unpleasant A1 climbing. At Grey Ledges, we were hit by a raging storm for about eighteen hours, and we got soaked in our low angle, ledgeless location at the top of Greys. We still had enough ropes to fix down to the Mammoth Terrace, where we suspected we would still find some other party's fixed ropes to the ground. Luckily we had a small espresso maker and stove to allow us a diversion from the cold, soaked conditions, otherwise we may have bailed. While we were getting hammered by the storm, huddled in our portaledge, we envied the team above us on the Shield Headwall who were not even using their portaledge rainfly, due to the overhanging wall above.

Above Grey, the climbing got steeper and more difficult. One of the pitches was a superb Wheat Thin type flake, which is mostly invisible from the ground because of its profile. Will then led a hard and steep A3+ pitch which took us onto the Shield Headwall proper. The pitch, which we named the 'Whipper Will', overhung about 50 feet in all. From there an A2 lost arrow crack led to the sea of blankness on the headwall. We drilled for 100 feet, climbed a 40 foot flake, and drilled for 80 more feet to the Canoe, the huge detached flake resting on a sloping stance up there. This was a perfect bivouac – flat, two feet wide, and 40 feet long, though I made the mistake of hammering a pin behind it as part of the belay. After a few hits, the entire block – which must have weighed fifteen tons – shifted a bit. We left the pin without cleaning it. Above the Canoe, a thin A3+ or A4 seam continued up, requiring many beaks and No1 and No2 copperheads. The dangerous ledge fall on this pitch precludes this route from becoming an immediate classic, but besides this and the Whipper Will pitch, all the climbing was of moderate difficulty. In unsettled weather, we finished from Chickenhead on the Shield, regretting later that we did not do an obvious direct finish to the right. The direct finish is recommended for subsequent ascents of this fine route up El Cap.

Difficulty: 5.10, A3+/A4, seven days spent of the first ascent.

Will Oxx on the 'Whipper Will' pitch of Flight of the Albatross



MIDDENDORF

the third eye mount hooker, wind river mountains

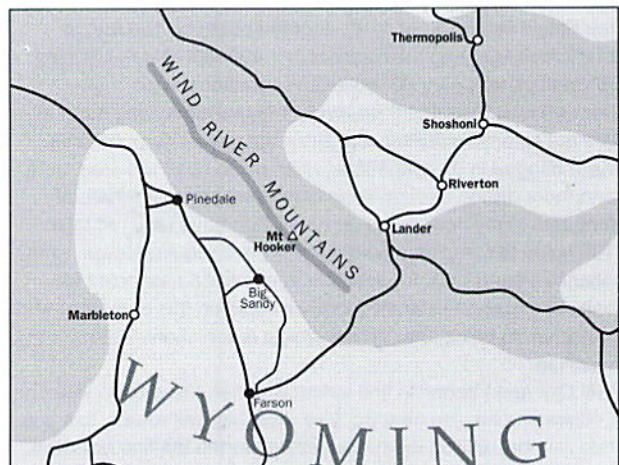
Mt Hooker is the premier big-wall monolith in Wyoming's Wind River range, with a 1,800-foot, just-off-vertical north face. The granite in the Winds is often well featured, allowing for classic long free routes, but the north face proper of Mt Hooker is largely steep and split only by a few cracks. The wall now has four big-wall routes on the main part of the north face. The Robbins Route – now all free – takes a line on the north-west edge of the monolith, and a shorter free route takes a line up the far left side of the north face. Steve Quinlan is the expert on this aspect of Mt Hooker, with a new solo route, a repeat of one of the other lines, and countless other attempts on the wall spread out over a period of twelve years. He and I had climbed some routes in Yosemite, and as he is a summertime guide in the nearby Tetons, he suggested that I come up to climb a new route he had picked out. In 1991 we attempted the line, only to be beaten off by a wicked snowstorm. The Wind Rivers has a short season in July and August, the other months being uninhabitable, let alone climbable. We were banking on having a short period of nice weather in early September, between the summer rains and winter, which begins in early to mid-September. Our second attempt the next year was foiled again by the onset of winter, with three feet of fresh snow dropped on us after weathering out a two-day storm on the wall. Each year we got our ropes a little higher – two pitches the first year, and to the top of pitch four the second. Each two-week expedition to the remote Mt Hooker required extensive planning, a twenty-mile hike with horses, establishing ourselves on the wall and the forced retreat, followed by a tedious hike out with 90lb loads. This summer we wisened up, going in a little earlier during mid-August despite the rains. We hiked in with our horse-



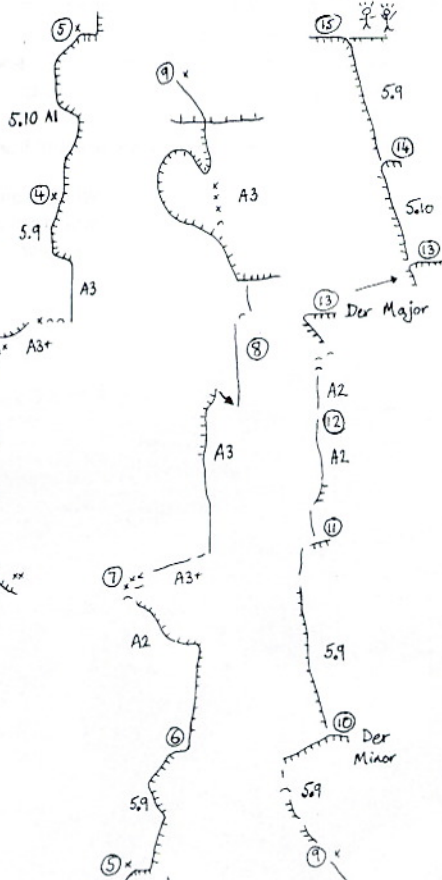
Above: Hooker's north face. The 'eye' is a roof near the skyline at two-thirds height.

packing guide and three horses which we hired for \$150 at Big Sandy Lodge, humped our 200lb of equipment over Haley Pass to base camp, and got organised in poor weather. Our timing was perfect. As soon as we had established base, the weather cleared, and except for a few slight showerings, we had perfect weather for the next five days. The weather crapped out again as we were hiking out. Our ropes had been trashed during the winter, and we debated heavily over reascending the hard-earned and difficult (A4) initial pitches of the route. We decided to jumarm the tattered ropes, though we could see that the sheaths were fully cut in many spots. We had left two lines fixed on the lowest section. One of these was cut, and the other was shredded and hooked on a flake off to the side. Steve jumared up to the flake, placed a belay, and while untangling the mess of shredded ropes above (whereupon one just fell free), discovered that he had been jumaring on a rope anchored solely by being jammed in a flake. The next jumarm was mine, and required ascending a completely shredded core – the sheath had long been reduced to nothing – for 200 core-squeaking feet. The climbing above our fixed ropes was generally moderate, the crux being a roof which Steve led through a huge eye-shaped feature which we named the route after. Above the roof, which is at about two-thirds height, the route went mostly free on excellent rock – a fine alpine big wall in a remote location.

Difficulty: 5.10, A4, 3 days were required for the final ascent with four pitches fixed.



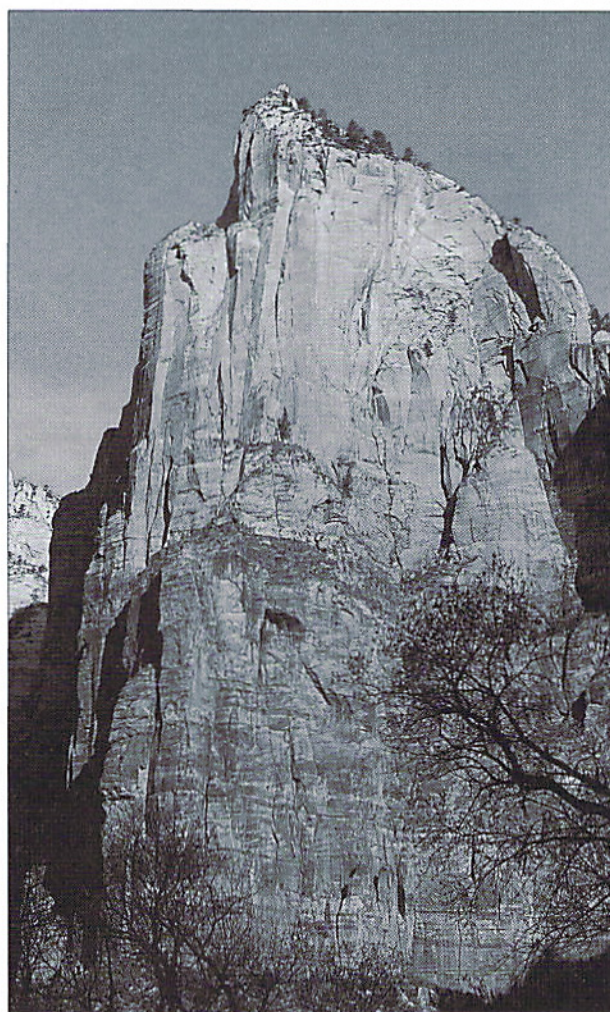
Rack:
3 Beaks
2 Rurps
8 KBs
12 LAs
3 ea 1/2, 5/8
2 ea 3/4
1 ea 1, 1 1/4, 1 1/2
2 sets Friends 1-4
1 No4 Camalot
1 4" Bong
2 sets TCUs
2 sets stoppers
2 sets brass nuts
2 hooks



tricks of the tramp isaac, court of the patriarchs, zion

Also in the spring of 1993, Brad Quinn, the photographer Bill Hatcher and I climbed a new 1,800-foot big wall route on Isaac, the centre Patriarch in Zion National Park. Zion is host to many great sandstone walls, ranging from 800 to 2,200 feet and spring is one of the best seasons, before the searing heat of summer, though the spring rains can often be a problem. In fact, we were rained off the route several times before the ascent. The route is split by a huge football-field-sized meadow halfway up. Because of being chased off by the rains, we ended up fixing ropes on much of the lower part, which climbed difficult off-widths and chimneys. On our final push, we were able to collect firewood on the midway ledge, and build a nice fire and drank Jack Daniels from a hospital IV bottle during the bivouac. Above the midway ledge, a splitter 800 foot crack system pierced the slightly overhanging and mostly flawless buttress above. Unfortunately, the lower 250 feet of the crack was knifeblade thickness, precluding free climbing. As an alternative, we climbed two full-length pitches left of the main splitter, one pitch of 5.10+ offwidth, and one pitch of 5.10+ overhanging hand and finger crack. Then we drilled several bolts to the right, pendulumed 80 feet back down and right, and joined the main crack 50 feet below where it opened up to finger size. After aiding at A2 for 60 feet, the crack opened up for free climbing and some spectacular pitches in a big-wall environment were had by all. We bivouacked amid snow on the summit, and descended the next day, which was an adventure in canyoning in itself.

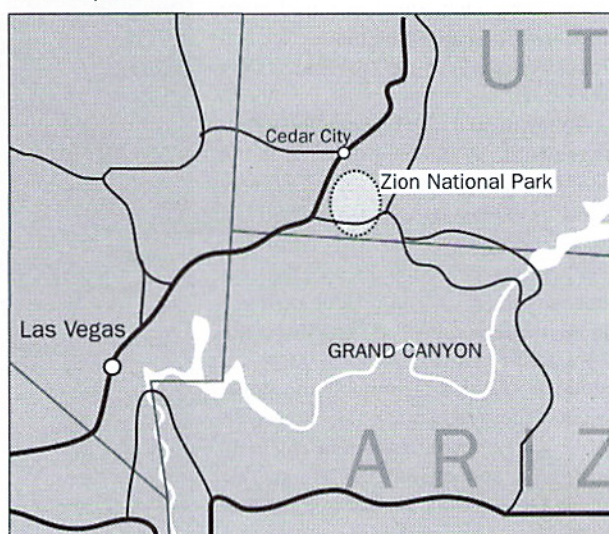
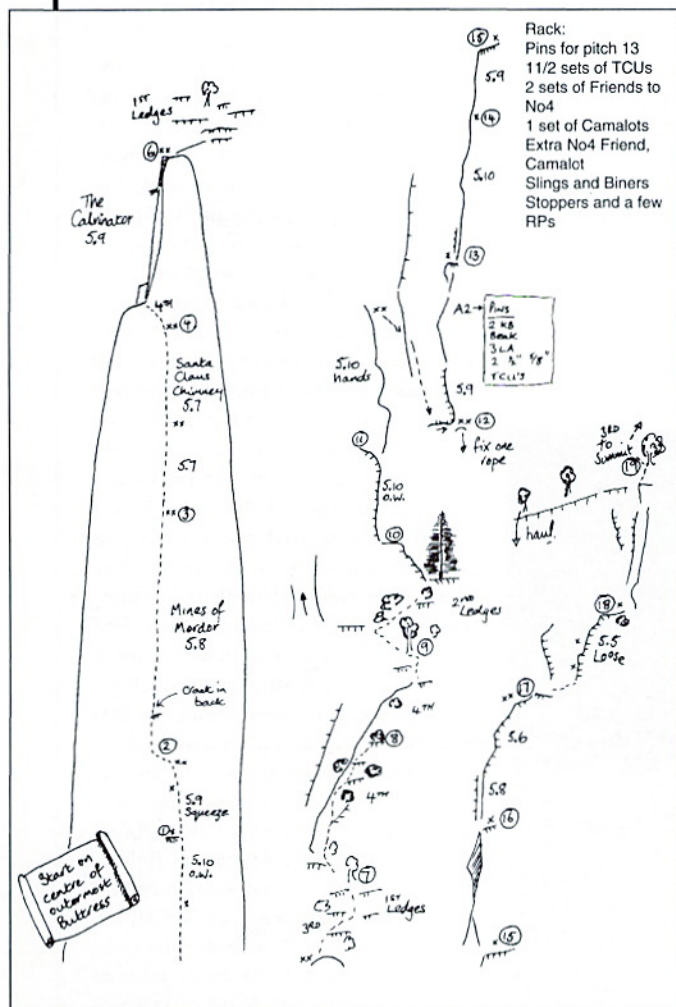
The route is likely to become an all-clean and possibly all-free route as the remaining 60 feet gets nailed a few more times. Like all sandstone nailing routes, the character of the route



BILL HATCHER

changes rapidly with hammer ascents. It is the responsibility of climbers to be aware of the rock destruction caused by pitons and do their best to 'scar constructively' – that is, only clean pitons in an upward direction so stopper placements can eventually be had. With due care and attention by both leader and cleaner of the aid pitch, this route could go all clean with one or two more nailing ascents.

Difficulty: 5.10+, A2 (only 60 feet of aid on the whole route). Five days were required for the first ascent with one bivouac on the final push.





Catalog 10



A5 Innovation

A5 Adventures designs and manufactures equipment with adventure in mind. Our portaledges have been directly responsible for most of the successful extreme big wall ascents around the world in recent years, and our packs, haulbags, and web products are regarded by the experts of the field as the best for strength, durability, and optimal function. We are proud of our contribution to climber's needs, and intend to continue to be the innovative leaders in big-wall gear designs.

The same over-built construction required for our big-wall equipment is built into every product we make, which are all designed and manufactured with highly active pursuits in mind, and are handcrafted by threadworkers in Flagstaff, Arizona. Our designs and construction are the result of years of product testing and feedback from many experts in the climbing and outdoor fields. Our long list of original concepts and ideas includes the first hanging rope bag (The Rope Bucket™), the first hooking piton (the A5 Birdbeak™), the first completely ready to haul pack (the Astropack™), as well as a slew of innovative features for big wall hanging tents and haulable packs. At A5 Adventures, our aim is to innovate advanced systems and products. We are dedicated to quality.

—John Middendorf, Proprietor

A5 Cliff Tents

The A5 Portaledge is the hanging tent of choice on extreme big wall ascents worldwide. Our strong and light one-, two-, and three-person portaledges have been used on difficult multi-day vertical ascents in Alaska, Antarctica, Africa, Baffin Island, Indian Himalaya, Pakistan Karakoram, Patagonia, and many other areas, including Zion, Yosemite, the Wind Rivers, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, and the Chamonix Alps. From Catherine Destivelle's solo first ascent on the Dru in 1990 to John Middendorf and Xaver Bongard's standard pushing ascent of *The Grand Voyage* on the Great Trango Tower in 1992 to Brad Jarret, Chris Breemer, and Christian Santalices' 1995 ascent of *The Dream* on Escudo, A5 portaledges have been tested in the most extreme conditions the world over. Ascents which were once impossible due to extreme conditions are now comfortably survivable with A5 hanging bivouac shelter technology.

Our patent pending Expedition Stormfly™ features a completely enclosed system for warmth and protection in the most extreme conditions. Triple urethane coated waterproof material, two doors which act as vents, and corner tie-downs are part of this revolutionary system for complete protection in even the fiercest storms on big walls in the high altitude and remote ranges of the world.

Jared Ogden checking the weather during the first ascent of the North Face of Trango Tower, Pakistan.
Photo by Willy Benegas.



A5 Alpine Double Ledge

The A5 Alpine Double Ledge is the ledge of choice for remote alpine adventures where every pound must be carefully considered without sacrificing security. It features a six-point adjustable suspension, and two Sharkfin™ dividers which are angled to maximize room for two people. The Sharkfins are detachable for bivouacs with cozy partners or for use as a super roomy one-person ledge. It comes with its own haulbag and your choice of fly. For most conditions, the patent pending single seam standard fly is adequate. For high altitude and extremely windy conditions, the patent pending Expedition StormFly™ (shown here) is choice. The A5 Alpine Double Portaledge is the ultimate expeditionary two-person big-wall shelter, proven on hundreds of expeditions worldwide since 1988. Size: 43" x 75" Weights: Ledge 9 lbs. Standard fly: 3 1/2 lbs. Expedition Stormfly: 5 lbs.



ENGINEERED QUALITY

A5 portaledge frames are constructed of 6061-T6 aircraft aluminum tubing and precision machined corners. Close tolerances ensure fast setup and disassembly. Lightweight and strong, the A5 frames are exceptionally rigid, and are designed to eliminate twisting and hourglassing. A5 portaledges are "bomber" in situations that would crumple any other design.



Machined corners Double butted tubes



Above: John Middendorf on the summit rim of Great Trango Tower after climbing the strenuous and overhanging Wormhole pitch (5.9 A2) at 20,000'. Photo by Xaver Bongard.

A5 Cliff Cabaña

The A5 Cliff Cabaña™ is a larger ledge for situations where the comfort of a roomy tent is worth the extra pounds. This ledge is ROOMY! The interior of this ledge feels like the proverbial cabaña. And this ledge is STRONG! We've designed the frame (the same ledge frame that we use for our 3-person Diamond ledge) to be rock solid even with three people hanging out on it during dinner or the social hour. Features include a three point divider, strong and easy-to-adjust cam buckle suspension system, reinforced drain holes in the bed, and for ease in set-up, our Fold-Over Bed Tensioning System™. It comes with our patent pending Cliff Cabaña Expedition Stormfly™ for withstanding any conditions mother nature may throw at you.

Size: 51" wide by 86" long.

Weight: Ledge 13 1/2 lbs. (equivalent to 6 1/2 quarts of water) Fly: 6 lbs. (3 quarts)



COMPACT TO PACK AND FAST TO SET- UP.

All A5 portaledges fit compactly in their own haulbag and can be set up anywhere, requiring only a single anchor point. Set-up takes just a few minutes and is a breeze thanks to A5's original Fold-over Bed Tensioning System™, in which the frame is assembled first, followed by tensioning of each end of the bed. The beds are constructed of tough nylon packcloth with ballistics scuffguards at wear points, and our suspensions feature strong and quickly adjustable cam-buckles. Comfort and strength is unsurpassed in A5 portaledges, the ultimate in vertical shelters.

"Don't be dropping that rack!"

Steve Gerberding about to send over some pitons during the first ascent of Kaos, El Cap.

Photo by Dave Bengston.



A5 Diamond Ledge



The A5 Diamond Ledge™ is a fully enclosed, top and optionally bottom suspended two or three person ledge system. The Diamond Ledge features a patent pending single seam, enclosed fly design which was originally prototyped and designed by John Middendorf in 1993 for an attempt on a new route on the East Face of Cerro Torre. The bottom suspension anchors the ledge down in high winds, while the aerodynamic diamond shape prevents the wind from catching on any large flat surfaces during a storm. The Diamond ledge comes with a super-comfortable hammock that can be suspended underneath the ledge frame for a third person. Haulbags and equipment can also be stored underneath with access through a lower door. The A5 Diamond Ledge is built to exacting standards for the most extreme conditions.



Above: A5 now offers 3 sizes of ledge platforms to choose from. On the left is the Cliff Cabana/Diamond Ledge frame, the Alpine Double frame is in the center, and Single Ledge frame is on the right.

Right: The Diamond Ledge in action during the pioneering first ascent of the 4000 foot East Face of Escudo in the Chilean Patagonia, a major nailng route which was climbed alpine style without fixed ropes in a 19 day push. Photo by Chris Breemer.



A5 Single Ledge



The A5 single ledge is a roomy one person platform and features a stable four-point suspension system which allows for a super comfortable hang while sitting on the center of the ledge with legs kicked out in space--great for those extended belays and enjoyable evenings after a long day.

Comes complete with hauling sack and standard rainfly. Packed with features, the A5 single ledge is undoubtedly the finest one person portaledge in the world!

Size: 29.5" x 84" Weight with fly: 10.5 lbs.

Simply Stormproof

Our standard flies feature our patent-pending single vertical seam design for maximum waterproofness and are constructed of urethane coated oxford nylon and a full length ballistics nylon scuffguard. An integrated stuffsack system allows for ultimate preparedness during times of mixed weather, because the fly can be clipped into the suspension ready to deploy at any time. A double drawstring closure and two tensioning straps below the ledge secure the fly tightly to the frame.

POLE KITS

We now offer custom length poles for all our portaledge models. Our pole system creates more interior room by extending out the fly.



BREATHABLE FLYS AVAILABLE.

For most big-wall conditions, our stock triple-urethane coated completely waterproof material is the best choice because of the extraordinary wet conditions found during many big wall storms. For certain specialized conditions where it will be exclusively cold and dry, breathable portaledge flies are a viable choice. Call A5 for more information.



Above: the North and South towers of Mt. Asgard, Baffin Island. Photo by Steve Quinlan.

A5 Gear proven in the field by experts!

Sue McDevitt

Sue is representative of a new generation of all-around climbers. Sue is a veteran of over 25 El Cap and Half Dome routes, including the first all-woman ascent of the Nose-in-a-day with Nancy Feagin (in 18 hours). Sue placed 4th in the Survival of the Fittest contest and has been featured in *Climbing Magazine*. Sue is a guide for the Yosemite Mountaineering School, specializing in guided big wall climbs, and of course, uses the best in big-wall gear: A5!

Photo right: Sue McDevitt racking up on a winter ascent of Mescalito.
Photo by Dan McDevitt.

Below: Steve Gerberding on the west face of Middle Triple during a 10 day storm. Photo by Jay Smith.



Steve Gerberding

From the Nose route in 1983 to the first ascent of the Reticent Wall in 1995, Steve Gerberding has climbed El Cap over 70 times. The list includes the Salathé, Lurking Fear, Zodiac, Tangerine Trip, Horse Chute, Muir Wall, North American Wall, New Dawn, Aurora, Mescalito, Shield, Tribal Rite, New Jersey Turnpike (now we're up to 1986), Zenyatta Mondatta, Wall of the Early Morning Light, Never-Never Land, Lunar Eclipse, Native Son, West Face, Space, Eagle's Way, Sea of Dreams, Lost in America, Atlantic Ocean Wall, Triple Direct, The Shortest Straw, Grape Race, The Real Nose, Octopussy, Gulf Stream, Flight of the Albatross, False Shield, Tempest, Wyoming Sheep Ranch, and the Bad Seed. Steve has climbed El Cap 29 separate times in a single push since 1990, with times ranging from 11 hours on the Nose, to 24 hours on the North American Wall, to 36 hours on the Pacific Ocean Wall. Steve has also climbed first-ascents on big walls in remote regions, including Back-to-the-Front and Badlands in Patagonia's Cerro Torre group.

A5 Deluxe Haulbag

Our deluxe haulbag extends the boundaries of innovative haulbag design. We start with all the original A5 concepts which define the modern haulbag (see our Grade VI description), then add some amazing features. The top riverbag-style closure keeps out bad weather and allows for effective overpacking with our over-the-top cam buckle strap. Our triple padded and anatomically curved shoulder and waist straps maximize carrying comfort. The suspension straps have a top and bottom scuff, and inside you will find daisy chains and a pocket. We offer our deluxe haulbag in two models: the slightly more durable (but more expensive) 33 ounce urethane coated material, and the proven white 28 ounce vinyl coated nylon. Our haulbags are uniquely designed from extensive experience in the vertical field.



Another exclusive A5 haulbag feature: the riverbag style closure.



Left: The A5 belay seat fits into the tuck-away pocket on all our haulbags for backpack carrying support.

Photo Right: "And only to find it is time to carry all that stuff back down!" Silvia Vidal on top of El Capitan.

Photo left: A5 Haulbags in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison.
Photo by Jeff Burton.



Grade VI Haulbag

A5 Haulbags are the proven standard all over the world for extreme big-wall ascents. Constructed of the tough vinyl coated nylon fabric which is famous for its durability, frictionless hauling, and waterproofness, A5 Haulbags feature an offset four-point suspension which runs full-length down the sides (unlike some competitor's models) and around the bottom for maximum security when your life depends on it. All seams are protected from abrasion including the shoulder straps and bottom seam which have their own scuffguards. A full strength clip-in loop for securing the haulbag at belays is integrated into the suspension. A packcloth skirt and external drawstring closure seal the bag tight and give it a streamlined bullet shape for hauling. An inside zippered pocket keeps small items accessible. Carrying loads to the base is no problem with our fully padded and original A5 suspension system: the padded waist belt is removable, and the integral padded shoulder straps pack inside the original A5 Tuck-Away™ pocket quickly for easy access and snag-free hauling. Our haulbags are the toughest on the market and have been known to survive unharmed after 2000 foot plummets from the top of a wall, fully packed and tossed. Volume: 10,000 cubic inches. Weight: 5 pounds.



The A5 Offset clip-in system allows better hanging access.



A5 Belay Seat

Our sturdy Bosun's Chair features an adjustable back rest strap and a foam padded seat for a good hang in any vertical situation. Fits into the Tuck-Away™ shoulder strap pocket on A5 haulbags for additional backpack support.



The mighty Barrille. Photo by Paul Turecki.

A5 Haulpack

The A5 Haulpack is a medium sized haulbag for Grade V's, or a second haulbag for longer multi-day routes. For Grade VI routes where a sizable rack, water, food, bivy and rain gear must all be carried, the A5 Haulpack is the tool. For extreme big wall ascents where huge racks must be organized, the A5 Haulpack is an excellent gear bag acting as a protective sheath for the racks, with separate slings of pitons, camming devices, mashheads, hooks and Birdbeaks suspended from the hauling point while still allowing easy access to other items inside of the pack.

The A5 Haulpack features fully padded A5 Tuck-Away™ shoulder straps and removable waist belt, internal clip-in points for securing gear, removable top lid with pocket, and tough vinyl coated nylon fabric construction.

Volume: 4000 in³. Weight: 3 1/2 lbs.



Evind Kallevik on Moby Dick, Ulaamortorssuaq.



Ulaamortorssuaq In Greenland.
Photos by Hans-Jørgen Oppi Christiansen

The A5 H₂O Chalkbag

Here's another innovative A5 solution to the age-old problem of how to keep your chalk dry on a multi-day climb during which a few storms may be encountered. This chalkbag features an pile-lined inner waterproof bladder with a separated drawstring closure and a top-zippered flap system that will keep the elements out. Holds about a block and a half of chalk (3 oz.), enough for many pitches way up off the deck. If you use chalk and aren't afraid of cutting loose from the the aid slings 20 pitches up on a 5.11 A5 wall, this chalkbag is for you!



THE A5 WARRANTY

Genuine A5 Adventures, Inc. products are fully warranted against defects in workmanship and materials. Should any flaw appear due to defective craftsmanship and materials, even after extended use, A5 Adventures will repair or replace, at our option, the product at no cost to the original purchaser.

REPAIRS

If your A5 equipment needs repair due to normal wear and tear, or if you drop your packed A5 ledge 2000 feet (we've had a few of these), we will provide the necessary service for a reasonable charge plus shipping and handling. Please clean the item, along with a description of what needs attention, and we will respond with a quote and an estimation of the repair time. Call A5, Attn: Jason

THE FINE PRINT

DISCLAIMER: Climbing is a dangerous activity. The gear sold by A5 is designed to create a safer, more efficient climbing system. It is the responsibility of the user to properly evaluate and understand an item's limitations and potential prior to in-field use, and to assume all risk and liability in connection therewith. A5 Adventures, Inc. shall not be liable for consequential damages, injury, or death arising from any use of the products sold by A5 Adventures, Inc.

Big Wall Web Page



Don't miss the Big Wall Web Page on the Internet, a collection of big wall tales and pictures, with links to an online A5 Catalog, other climbing pages, the weather, and more. Find it at:

<http://www.primenet.com/~mids/>

John Swenson Artwork

A5 is proud to offer cards from our esteemed cover artist. A set of 12 assorted Swenson cards with envelopes go for \$20 postpaid.

A limited edition (of 750) 12" x 18" signed and numbered fine art print of our cover is available from the artist. For details, call John Swenson at 907-766-2097 in Haines, Alaska.

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For further information,

Call 520-779-5084,

FAX 520-779-1040,

email A5info@aol.com,

or write: A5 Adventures,

1109 S. Plaza Way #296,

Flagstaff, Arizona 86001

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A5 Adventures Price List

Hanging Bivouac Systems

	Price
Single Portaledge with fly	\$585.00
--Single fly only	\$225.00
Alpine Double Portaledge	
--with standard fly	\$655.00
--with Expedition StormFly™	\$750.00
--Expedition Stormfly only	\$350.00
Cliff Cabaña™ with EXP fly	\$875.00
Three-person Diamond Ledge™	\$1000.00
Pole Kit (specify ledge model)	\$20.00
A5 Silk-screened Logo	Call
Breathable Fabric Flies	Call
Tee-Bone Hammock™	\$180.00

Haulbags

Vinyl Grade VI Haulbag	\$155.00
Deluxe Vinyl Haulbag	\$185.00
Deluxe Urethane Haulbag	\$245.00
Haul Pack	\$132.50

Packs

Astropack™	\$128.50
Lechuguilla Pack™	\$125.00
Alpine Pack	\$132.50
Buddy Bag™ (Ballistics/Cordura)	\$25.00

More Sewn Goods

Traveler's Duffel	\$84.50
H ₂ O Chalk Bag™	\$26.50
Bolt Bag	\$26.50
Rope Bucket™	\$30.00

Webbing Products

4-Step Aider (each)	\$23.50
5-Step Aider (each)	\$26.50
Alpine Aiders (each)	\$18.00
Daisy Chain-Regular	\$18.00
Daisy Chain-Long	\$20.00
Double Gear Sling	\$75.00
Small Double Gear Sling	\$60.00
Nose-in-a-day Gear Sling	\$26.50

Hardware

A5 Birdbeak	\$8.00
Mash-head™ #1	\$2.00
Mash-head #2	\$2.00
Mash-head #3	\$2.50
Mash-head #4	\$2.50
Mash-head #5	\$3.00
Rivet Hanger (3/32")	\$2.00

Stuff Bags

Stuff Bag--small	\$7.50
Stuff Bag--medium	\$8.50
Stuff Bag--large	\$10.50
Stuff Bag--extra large	\$12.50

Miscellaneous

A5 Belay Seat	\$30.00
Gardner Hook	\$20.00
Big Wall Book	\$10.00
Wilderness Rock Drill	\$85.00
9/32" Collet for above	\$15.00



A5 Tee-shirts with our famous "Overhanging Man" illustration. 100% cotton Haynes Beefy-t's. Medium, large, and extra-large. \$18.00

A5 Adventures, Inc.
1109 S. Plaza Way #296
Flagstaff, AZ 86001
520-779-5084

We strongly recommend seeing your dealer first, but we realize many climbers don't live near an A5 retail shop, so we offer our products by mail. We accept check, money order, Visa and MasterCard. Shipping for USA: \$5.00 for orders up to \$200, and \$8.00 for orders more than \$200. Arizona residents add 6.5% sales tax. Foreign orders will be charged at actual shipping cost plus \$3.00 handling.
 Call 602-779-5084, or FAX 520-779-1040.

A5 Dealers

Our products are available from excellent climbing stores around the world. After reviewing our catalogue, we suggest that you take it along while visiting your local shop. If they are not yet one of our valued dealers, we offer a mail order service but please understand that immediate delivery may not be possible since all our products are individually handcrafted by quality threadworkers in Flagstaff, Arizona in a quality process that cannot be rushed. For more information on the latest A5 dealers, call 520-779-5084.

ALASKA

Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking

ARIZONA

The Edge (Flagstaff)

Mountain Sports (Flagstaff)

Desert Mountain Sports

Summit Hut (Tucson)

CALIFORNIA

California Outfitters (Fresno)

Marmot Mountain Works (Berkeley)

Marmot Mountain Works (Kentfield)

Mountain Tools (Monterey)

Mountain High (Ridgecrest)

Nomad Ventures (Escondido)

Nomad Ventures (Carlsbad)

Nomad Ventures (Idyllwild)

Nomad Ventures (Joshua Tree)

Northern Mountain Supply (Eureka)

Prolithic Sports (Los Angeles)

Sierra Nevada Adventure Company

Sunrise Mountaineering (Livermore)

Sunrise Mountaineering (Walnut Creek)

Western Mountaineering (San Jose)

The Yosemite Mountain Shop

COLORADO

Backcountry Experience

Boulder Mountaineer

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Telluride Sports

IDAHO

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MONTANA

Barrel Mountaineering (Bozeman)

Rocky Mountain Outfitter (Kalispell)

NEVADA

Reno Mountain Sports

Desert Rock Sports

NEW MEXICO

Snowy River Outfitters

OREGON

Oregon Mountain Community

Climber's Choice International

TEXAS

Mountain Sports (Arlington)



UTAH

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Outdoor Outlet (Saint George)

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Mountain Gear (Spokane)

Marmot Mountain Works (Bellevue)

Swallow's Nest (Seattle)

Feathered Friends

SOUTHEAST STATES

Black Dome Mountain Sports

High Country Outfitters (GA)

Mountain Ventures (GA)

Hills and Trails (Winston Salem, NC)

Sherrill (Greensboro, NC)

Mountain Trails (Winchester, VA)

Virginia Beach Rock Gym

EAST COAST

Climb High (Shelburne, VT)

IME (North Conway, NH)

Campmor (Paramus, NJ)

The Mountaineer (Keene Valley, NY)

CANADA

Mountain Equipment Co-op

INTERNATIONAL

Australia: Trango Mountain Products

Japan: Lost Arrow LTD

United Kingdom: Outside (Sheffield)

United Kingdom: High Sports IC

Spain: Barrabes (Huesca)

France: Snell Sports (Chamonix)

France: Patagonia (Chamonix)

France: Expé (Pont-en-Royans)

Germany: Outdoor Unlimited (Gunnigen)

Germany: Sport Scheck

Switzerland: Bugaboo Sport (Fribourg)

Sweden: Naturens Rop (Stockholm)

Norway: Skandinavisk Høyfjellsutstyr AS

More Essentials...



Seam Grip for sealing A5 Rainflys:

Sealing with thin liquid seam sealer is a joke for conditions found on big walls, as is depending on taped seams. The only viable solution for big wall conditions is McNett Corporation's Seamgrip™, a specially formulated urethane product that lays down a durable 100% waterproof seal that bonds permanently to nylon. McNett's order desk is at 1-800-221-7325 (Bellingham, WA).



UNITED STATES PLASTIC CORP.

Lima, Ohio. 1-800-537-9724

US Plastics Corporations inexpensive selection of 8, 15, and 30 gallon "Open Head Shipping Containers with cover lock" (barrels) are excellent gear and water carrying containers for expeditionary climbs.



Big Wall Tools and Techniques.

For the complete reference on big wall tips and techniques, check out *How to Rock Climb: Big Walls!* by John Middendorf and John Long, published by Chockstone Press, Evergreen, Colorado.



Cheat to win!
Forrest Gardner's handcrafted hooks are for getting heinous on the steep edges.

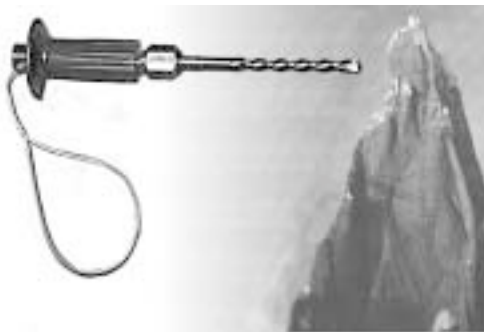


Rechargeable AA system for expeditions with new Nickel Metal Hydride battery technology (environmentally friendly rechargeable batteries). Available from the Real Goods Catalog 1-800-762-7325.



200 DA (Double Angle) Collets for the Hurricane Mountain Works Drill. Available from J&L Industrial Supply (Livonia, MI) 1-800-521-9520. The 9/32" collet is popular as it fits most drills made for the Rawl #14 taper system.

Tools



HURRICANE MOUNTAIN WORKS WILDERNESS HAND DRILL

The Hurricane Mountain Works hand drill is a compact rock drilling system which secures a drill in the holder and allows for quick change of bits in the field. An interchangeable collet system allows use of any size drills. Standard collet (included) accepts SDS carbide tipped bits. Other features include a hardened stainless steel body with anti-mushrooming steel insert on the striking surface, a rubber grip with flange for hand protection, and a spinning wrist loop. Comes with instructional brochure complete with drilling tips.

A5 MASHHEADS™

Mashheads are speciality big-wall items for mashing into shallow grooves and pockets for aid placements.

A5 Mashheads are made from steel aircraft cable and genuine copper and aluminium Nicopress sleeves.

Size Min.Diam. Mash Mat'l. Cable Strength

#1	0.180"Copper	480 lbs.
#2	0.250"Copper	920 lbs.
#3	0.350"Alum.	1700 lbs.
#4	0.380"Alum.	2600 lbs.
#5	0.475"Alum.	2600 lbs.



A5 BOLT BAG

The ultimate bolt bag, with two internal pockets for organizing bolts and hangers, and four slot pockets for extra drill bits. Tough nylon ballistics construction with drawstring closure, full strength clip-in loop and side hammer holsters.



A5 BIRDBEAK™

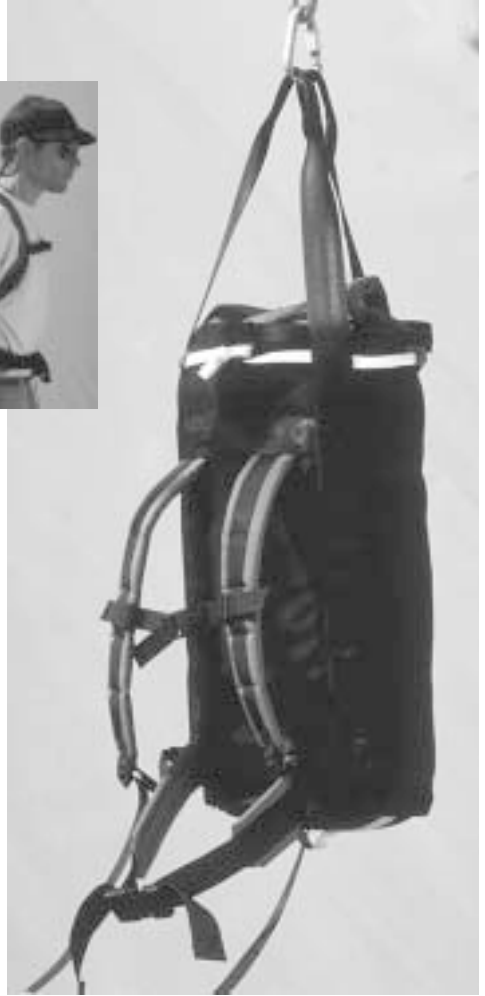
THE ORIGINAL HOOKING PITON. The 4130 chrome-moly steel A5 Birdbeak™ has revolutionized difficult aid climbing. Used for the thinnest of thin vertical cracks. Swaged 3/32" cable. Most modern big wall routes require at least 3-5 beaks.



Photo: Todd Scarboro and Rick Phillips on Hogs and Horses A4+, "somewhere in North Carolina". Photo by Will Van De Berg.

A5 Astropack

The Astropack™ is for the climber who wants both a comfortable pack to carry on long approaches and a haulable pack for multi-pitch routes. Imagine you're heading up the West Face of El Cap, poised to cruise 1500 feet of vertical stone. All your gear is loaded in the Astropack. At the base, simply tuck in the shoulder straps, pack away the waist belt, and you've got yourself a streamlined haulbag ready to haul. At the summit, pull out the shoulder straps and attach the waist belt for a comfortable descent. Whether you're climbing El Capitan, Astroman, the Diamond, or any other long day route, this pack is for you. The Astropack features ballistics nylon construction, an inside pocket which doubles as a lid in the carrying mode, and protective scuff guards for the shoulder straps and bottom seam. Volume: 2350 in³. Weight: 2 lbs.



Sue McDevitt on Zenyatta Mondatta. Photo Dan McDevitt.

A5 Lechuguilla Pack

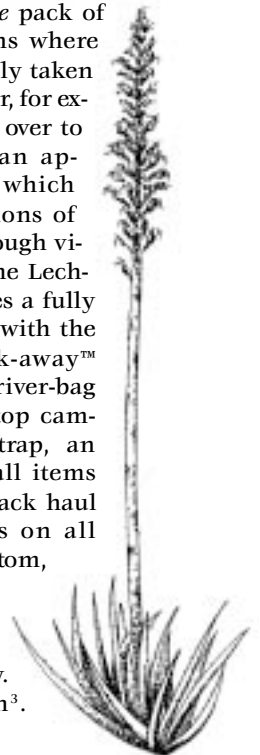


Above: Donald Davis and Steve Maynard in Lechuguilla Cave. Photo by Dave Jones.

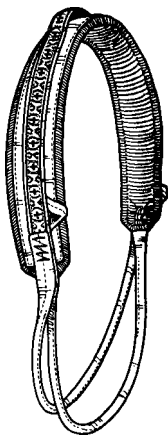


Above: Torre de Paine. Photo by John Middendorf.

What began as a pack specifically designed for multi-day trips into the wondrous Lechuguilla cave has become the new standard for all adventures which involve stealth and energy-efficient movement over rugged terrain. This is *the* pack of choice for situations where the pack is frequently taken off in order to haul or, for example, to be passed over to a partner during an approach to a climb which involves short sections of 5th class. Made of tough vinyl coated nylon, the Lechuguilla pack features a fully padded suspension with the A5 original Tuck-away™ shoulder straps, a river-bag style closure with top cam-buckle tensioning strap, an inside key and small items pocket, front and back haul straps, scuffguards on all seams, and top, bottom, and side handles for the ultimate in carrying comfort and maneuverability. Volume 2350 in³. Weight: 3 lbs.



LECHUGUILLA



Nose-in-a-day Gear Sling

The Nose-in-a-day™ gear sling is another unique product from A5. We have added incredible functionality to the standard, over-the-shoulder gear sling by adding a second gear loop. The two different length loops offer twice the sling space to organize the rack and biners, and each sling can be brought forward independently for quick and easy gear identification and selection on hard climbs. Designed for routes which require a double set of cams, this gear sling is set up for adventure. Two Nose-in-a-day gear slings can be connected for a lightweight double gear sling. Regular and large sizes.



Big Wall Stuff Sacks

Good hanging stuff sacks are essential for keeping organized on a big wall. Our tough packcloth stuff bags will be your constant companions on all your big wall climbs.



A5 Buddy Bag

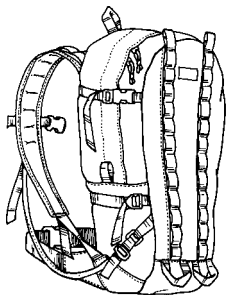
The A5 Buddy Bag™ is a great waist pocket which rides unobtrusively on the small of your back. Features an expandable baffle pouch with two clip-in loops on the wings, and fully taped seams. Cordura and ballistics nylon construction make this a sturdy bag that will be your pocket of choice for small accoutrements during active endeavors.



A5 Rope Bucket

The original Rope Bucket™. The A5 Rope Bucket is a rock climbing tool for multi-pitch routes. Packcloth construction and drawstring closure protects your rope from dirt and UV rays. On the rock, the rope bucket hangs from a two point suspension. The main compartment unzips and the expandible bellows folds open to form a bucket. Forget about rope nightmares at hanging stances: just stack the rope in the bucket for an easy feed and organized belay. Holds two 9mm ropes or one 11mm rope comfortably. Assorted colors.

A5 Alpine Pack



The A5 Alpine Pack is the best of its class of small and light packs which carry the maximum load possible without compromising mobility while hiking and climbing. The slim profile and teardrop shape allows for full freedom of movement of the upper body and centers the load for optimum balance, while the A5 wing system suspension cradles and equalizes the pack. The A5 Alpine Pack features anatomically curved and padded shoulder straps, full side compressibility, inside zippered pocket, tough ballistics construction, fully taped seams, ice-axe loops, and removable gear slings for racking gear. This phenomenally designed and durable pack is ideal for full day alpine climbs and summit bids. Tri-color design.

Volume: 1900 in³. Weight: 21 oz.



Trango Tower southeast and north faces. The Kurtyka-Loretan route is on the sunlit face on the left, and the North Face route goes up the center of the shaded wall on the right.



In the Great Amphitheater on the first ascent of the North Face of Trango Tower. Photos by Eric Brand.

Gear Sling

A5 Double



Our big-wall double gear sling is made for the “big jobs”. The full-strength chest harness stabilizes the system while the foam and pile padded, breathable mesh shoulder straps maximize comfort. Our regular model fits everyone as the entire set-up is adjustable for the perfect fit. Also available is a smaller version with fixed gear loops for folks up to 5'6". All the experts agree: this is the gear sling of choice for carrying the big racks.



Above: Charlie Fowler on the Shield headwall during the first clean ascent. Photo by Beth Wald.



Daisy Chains

Daisy chains are the essential safety extensions for aid climbing and for use with ascenders. A5 daisy chains are made from strong 11/16" supertape webbing with triple bartacks at each pocket. All pockets run down the same side for low stretch when testing and moving onto placements. Overall strength exceeds 3800 lbs.

2 lengths:

Regular: 48", 14 pockets.

Long: 57", 18 pockets.

Photo right: Full strength grab loop and sub-top and second steps are original A5 features. ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES!

Below: "The Big Stone next to the road."

Below left: "The Smaller Stone back in the woods."

Both photos by Chris Falkenstein.

A5 Aiders

A5 four and five step aiders are designed by experts and incorporate the best features for serious aid. Sturdy 1" web construction, alternating and reinforced main steps with sub-steps, and full-strength grab loops are definitions of the modern aider. Aider pairs are color coded.

Alpine aiders (not pictured) are 3/4" web 4-step aiders for climbs with moderate aid sections or for use as sub-aiders with a pair of our five-step aiders.



Tee-Bone Hammock

The Tee-Bone Hammock™ is yet another innovative A5 solution to the longstanding problem of a viable lightweight hanging bivouac system. Hammocks have traditionally been torture devices because they cramp the shoulders and crush the user against the rock. Our soon to be patented upper frame design hangs from a single point and holds the hammock away from the rock, keeping it open and ensuring plenty of room for the shoulders and hips. The Tee-Bone Hammock transforms immediately into an excellent belay chair with an integrated head rest and an adjustable system which allows the user to sit up and drop the legs with a simple pull of a strap. The Tee-bone hammock is a revolutionary tool, guaranteed to make possible a new standard of overnight climbs where fast and light is the key. Weight: 3 lbs.



Bill Hatcher Photo

A5 Traveller's Duffel

Our Traveller's Duffel is the perfect companion for extended weekend trips, and is designed to fit on airplanes as carry-on luggage. The main compartment has a large half-moon zip opening for full access and suitcase convenience. Two separate end pockets keep items organized when travelling. Tough ballistics nylon and bomber A5 construction to ensure your Traveller's Duffel will last a lifetime. Volume: 2800 in³ Weight: 2 lbs.



Climbers on El Cap. Photo by Chris Falkenstein.

Photo Gallery



Life on the Inside

Above: Andre VanCampenhoud peeking out after a storm on Tangerine Trip. Cam Lawson.
Upper Left: Kevin Gheen sitting out a storm on the East Face of Barrille. Photo by Doug Scott.
Left: The Todd Skinner apartments at 18,000 feet during his 60 day ascent of the Kurtyka-Loretan route on Trango Tower. Photo by Bill Hatcher.
Below: Escudo! Brad Jarret in the Diamond Ledge ("The Patagonian Palace"). Chris Breemer.



A person is rappelling down a rope against a large flag with a star and stripes. The person is silhouetted against the flag, which is set against a blue sky with clouds. The rope is attached to a carabiner and a knot.

**AS Adventures, Inc.
1109 S. Plaza Way #296
Flagstaff, AZ 86001
520-779-5084**

To:

CHIACCIAIO BALTORO

Elaborazione internazionale. Meridiano origine 74°57'32" E. Est Greenwich.
Falso origine per la coordinata gaussiana E = Km. 500



Dai tipi dell'Istituto Geografico Militare
tutti i diritti di riproduzione e di rielaborazione riservati



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- Carta al 12500 della spedizione Italiana al K2 (1954)
- Rilievo stereofotogrammetrico terrestre della spedizione Italiana (1954)

Scala 1:100 000
Distanza delle curve di livello m. 100

Segni convenzionali

- neve Piani trigonometrici
- neve Quote topografiche
- neve Quote barometriche
- Gole di ghiaccio

Stampa 1969
Ristampa 1977

TEARS FOR TRANGGO

by Dag Kolsrud

From Mountain 111



Like so many other projects, the idea of the North Pillar of Great Trango Tower was conceived at home in the living room. The spark was kindled by a silhouette photo of the pillar in the centrespread of *Mountain* 49. During the autumn of '83 we formed a team: Stein P. Aasheim, Hans Christian Doseth, Finn Daelhi and myself. A formal application with a cheque for \$400 was sent to the Ministry of Tourism in Islamabad, and after the usual interminable problems with gear, sponsorship and logistics, we finally left for the mountains in June 1984.

During preparations we frequently discussed the question of sponsorship, of selling ourselves and the expedition to industry to realise our aims. With our academic background the possibilities of self-finance were small, but then our ability to keep the moral question on a theoretical level was correspondingly greater! However, the seeking of sponsorship was instructive and gave us some knowledge of the psychology of the business world, and the hard work of preparation taught us a lot about co-operation and made us feel closer to each other, both physically and mentally.

Our negotiation of lowland Pakistan was comparatively painless, despite the usual inroads with bureaucracy, the ravages of illness, and a hair-raising bus journey. Eight

days after our arrival in Pakistan, the four of us trudged into the mountains along the wild, grey glacier river of Braldu, along with Ragnhild Amundsen, Iver Gjelstenli and Haavard Nesheim (who were to climb the American Route on the same mountain), our Liaison Officer Zamir, 30 porters each carrying 25 kilos, and the "slave-driver" - the porters' skilled chief and leader, Sirdar Issa.

The approach took seven days, through dangerous and unpleasant terrain; up and down along loose valley sides, partly along the wide, ice-cold Braldu river and partly across gravel-covered glaciers.

The view from the valley bottom was limited for most of the approach, but on the penultimate day there opened up from the end of the Baltoro glacier a most awesome panorama. Colossal granite massifs reared up in front of us and above them slim spires pierced the sky. Far away at the other end of the Baltoro glacier, we could see the brooding forms of enormous 8000m snow covered giants.

We erected base camp in a small, flat, sandy hollow between moraine ridges and the mountainside, with a clearwater stream just a couple of hundred metres away, a view towards Masherbrum in the south, and the summit of the North-East Pillar of the

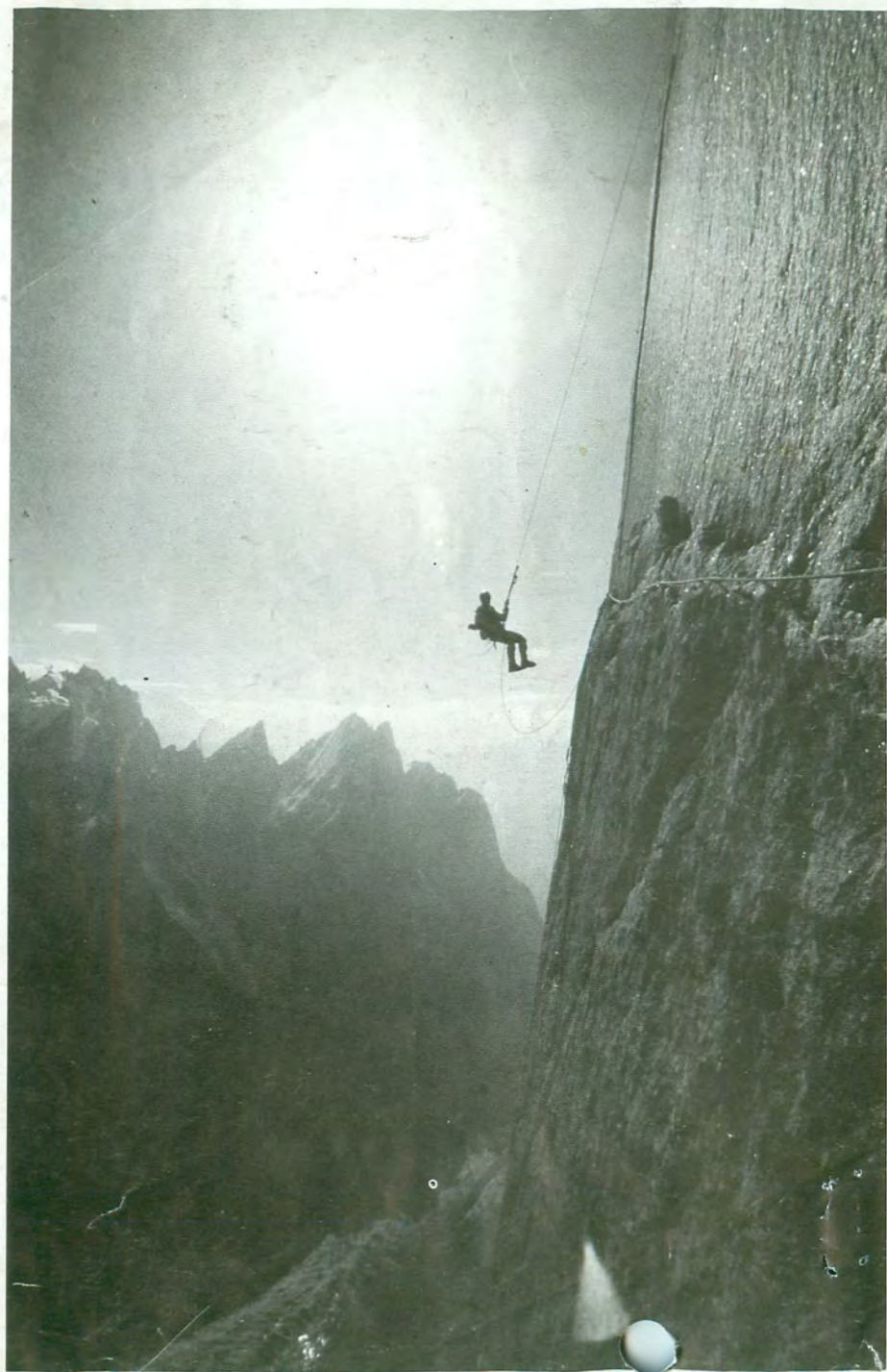
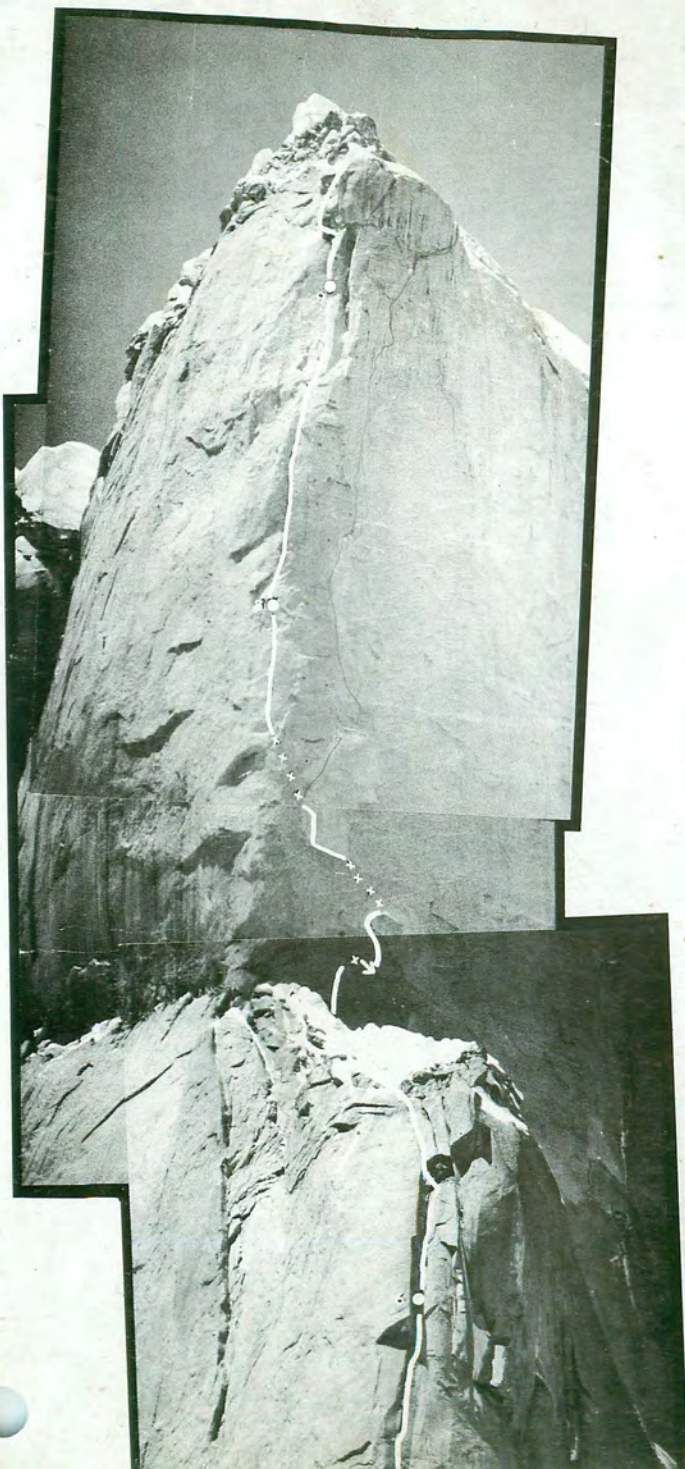
mountain to the north. We paid off the porters and quickly fell into the routine of base camp life, frying our bodies in the morning sun before quickly diving for down jackets as the sun disappeared behind Trango.

We knew little about the pillar, and had planned our climb with no more than three or four photos (taken from a distance, and showing only the upper part) to help us, and some quick phone calls to foreign climbers who had knowledge of the Trango massif. Yet already on the approach we discovered

Above: The author contemplates his bedtime drink suspended above the awful abyss. All photos Kolsrud collection.

Opposite: Hans Christian Doseth bat-hooking across to the bottomless crack on the headwall of the North East Pillar of Great Trango Tower.







Left: Hans Christian Doseth arranges his Walkman prior to the hooking session across the headwall.

Opposite Top: The climbing was dogged by uncertain weather. Doseth is seen starting out on the upper part of the route, which involved a detour to the right.

Opposite Bottom: Climbing on the lower buttress was often in meltwater runnels, which forced the team to use aid.

our first mistake when climbers on their way out told us that the pillar faced not towards the Baltoro glacier, but almost away from it. We were very glad to find this out at this stage, otherwise we would have been a rather confused and worried gang, searching on the wrong side of the mountain!

The morning after we arrived at base camp, we anxiously plodded for almost an hour across the stone-covered glacier between Trango and the Cathedral massifs to take a closer look at the route. What if it turned out to be quite different from our expectations? But no, not only did it meet our expectations, it exceeded them. From a distance of one kilometre several crack-free sections remained unsolved, even with the aid of binoculars. We took photographs and eagerly discussed the size of the climb, and the time required. Whilst we were doing this, the sun disappeared from the pillar - it was one o'clock.

After a few days of acclimatisation, we started ferrying all the gear up fixed ropes to a large snowfield, which stretched several hundred metres further toward the foot of

the pillar. From this point we estimated that the climbing would progress slowly enough for us to acclimatise as we gained height. From what we could see, there would be a lot of aid climbing, and we had come prepared with a large amount of equipment: two double Gramichi Cliff Dwellings (Portaledges) which would provide shelter, 6 ropes, 20 litres of paraffin (in case we had to melt all the water we needed), food for four for 20 days, and at least as many kilos of 16mm film and photo equipment, in addition to the climbing and bivouac gear.

We stood at last, with all our gear at the foot of the Pillar, feeling as well prepared as we might when confronted with 1.5 vertical kilometres of granite. But our broad climbing experience, from the Troll Wall and El Capitan to the Himalaya, made us feel competent to face most things. With this official attitude, we pounced on the first pitches and moved up to what was to be our third camp above the ground. It got steep up there for the last few pitches. To start with there were easy angled slabs and the gear had to be jumarruped on our backs in

several stages. It was a relief to change over to hauling. We hung our Camp 3, made from Portaledges, in the bottom of a several hundred metre long crack system on the right side of the pillar front. We were very tired but glad to be in vertical surroundings. The climbing had been more or less free, with a little aid on wet rock up to the cracks we were hanging in.

Further up the crack there was a lot of free climbing at VI+ with some aid sections necessitated by melt water in the crack. The line was continuous and elegant, the rock of the best granite - an aesthetic pleasure indeed. Unfortunately, the good weather didn't last and showers moved in, but the temperature stayed over 0°C and there wasn't any wind.

We climbed with two leading and two hauling, moved camp, filmed and/or had a rest day. We fixed ropes and stretched them between camps either as high as they would reach or to a suitable new camp site, then moved ourselves, with the luggage following. It was rather like a large caterpillar. On some days we made good progress, other



GREAT TRANGO TOWER

North East Pillar

The line of the Norwegian route is marked.

Great Trango Tower (centre) rests amid an ocean of perfect granite. With recent developments in the Chamonix area in mind, perhaps this area will become a Himalayan crag climbing ground.

days only one and a half pitches. While we were on the lower pillar it rained every day, which soon slowed us down.

We set up Camp 4 at the top of an enormous detached flake with big blocks and a cornice. From here we traversed over to the left side of the pillar and the exquisite Yosemite-style cracks ended. Camp 5 was suspended on top of another detached flake above some slim diedres.

The rock steepened and became rougher as the route followed a defined melt water line falling from the great cornice at the foot of the upper pillar. We were trapped by an enormous diedre which unfortunately offered wet, dirty and undefinable technical climbing. Leading up to Camp 6 were some pitches of A3/4, and as they were situated right in the middle of a stream they took most of a day each and necessitated the considerable use of skyhooks and copperheads. The last part of the lower pillar was made unpleasant by large amounts of water, and sludge slides coming from the cornice, but at least it wasn't dangerous.

After 11 days and 25 pitches, we finally stood atop the rotten snowfield and gazed up at the near vertical headwall. The snow provided no shelf; it just lay there over an easy angled but sharp ridge where the lower pillar and headwall met. The flanks of the ridge plunged steeply down on both sides into avalanche gullies and icefields.

We had reckoned on a week for the lower pillar, but changing conditions and weather, inefficient organisation of gear and tasks, and the rigmarole of filming had slowed us. Maybe we had underestimated the mountain a bit too, even if we had been able to do the lower part in half the time with better conditions and less baggage.

The headwall looked terribly steep, and we estimated it to be about 500 metres high with at least 15 pitches. This allowed for a detour to reach the diedre/chimney and crackline which fades away about 150 metres above the snow ledge.

It took us four exhausting days and five pitches to reach the crack system. We arrived there by climbing in a bow out to the right and back. Two good peg cracks petered out and from there hooking, drilling and pendules to the right led to an Africa-shaped flake. There then followed some bat-hooking up to the left, broken by a Thank God Ledge and an expanding flake which brought us to the foot of the crack. During the last bout of long and heavy drilling, only Bruce Springsteen's *Working on the Highway* pumping in our ears from the Walkmen kept us going.

Gradually it became clear that we were running out of time. Our food supplies were rapidly dwindling despite a starvation diet, and by the time we reached the crack we only had enough left to last four people for our days. There was still a long way to go, over unknown ground, and it could easily take four days to reach the top with at least three days to get down. Abseiling would be the only method of retreat if we wished to recover all the gear, including the photographic equipment and all the exposed film.



Prospects for success looked dismal.

I had hinted earlier at the possibility of two of us descending with as much gear as possible, thus giving the two remaining more chance of reaching the top. It would be better for half the team to reach the very top than for all of us to make it only 90% of the way.

Still, it's one thing to acknowledge a concept intellectually, but quite another actually to put it into practice. Of course nobody was keen to return, and we discussed the matter for a couple of days. In the meantime we continued, and the crack opened to an offwidth of such difficulty that lack of protection and general exhaustion made it impossible to free climb. In addition, the ropes were stretched out, and if someone

was going to turn back it had to be now, before we moved our camp upwards. With no other fight than that of personal internal conflict, between one's own desires and ambitions and a wish to be back on the ground with all its comforts, we reluctantly came to a unanimous decision. Stein and I returned early one morning, while Finn and Hans moved the camp up the fixed ropes. It was a sad moment, *even though* it helped to see the other two continuing high above us. We got down in the evening of the second day and staggered wearily into base camp to gorge ourselves.

Through binoculars, we saw Hans and Finn reach the top five days after our descent. We had followed their progress thoroughly towards the top, and they'd





made particularly good progress over the last two days. Our exultation that day was great, and we lit an enormous bonfire after dark as a signal of joy in addition to the torch messages we sent every night. We were pleased that our split-up had achieved results. I had every faith in Hans and Finn, but even so I was impressed by their achievement, especially in view of their hunger and exhaustion.


During their days up to the top we photographed and filmed them, and from base camp we could see them abseiling from the upper part of the headwall before they disappeared out of sight behind a shielding ridge. We agreed that Stein should leave in advance for Islamabad, whilst I went over to Urdukas to do some filming and photo-

graphy. We expected the summit pair to be down on the evening I returned to base camp, eight days after we had split up. They did not come that evening, and by the morning after they had vanished without a trace. Careful investigation with binoculars pointed to an accident, and that they must be lying out of sight by the foot of the pillar, or in a crevasse. On the evening of the eleventh day I reached Skardu in an exhausted condition with a letter from our Liaison Officer saying that a helicopter had to be put at our disposal.

The authorities would not grant me a helicopter inspection, as this was only given to transport the sick and injured, and not to search for corpses. It was not till after I had made contact with Stein in Islamabad and

the Norwegian authorities were informed about events, that things started moving. Because of friction between civilian and military authorities and a lack of helicopters, it took three weeks to get two flights into the mountain. On the first trip I pinpointed the bodies of Hans and Finn by the foot of the pillar, together with sacks and gear. But ten days later, when the second flight was organised to take them out after requests from Norway, bad weather and an avalanche had swept away all trace of them except for a few bits of protection, pieces of rope and the Norwegian flag.

We began to realise that there was nothing more that we could do. The experience, achievements and victory had become quite meaningless and could give no comfort.



Edit
COPY

Big Wall Tech Manual

Big Wall Tech Manual

by
John Middendorf
illustrated by
John McMullen

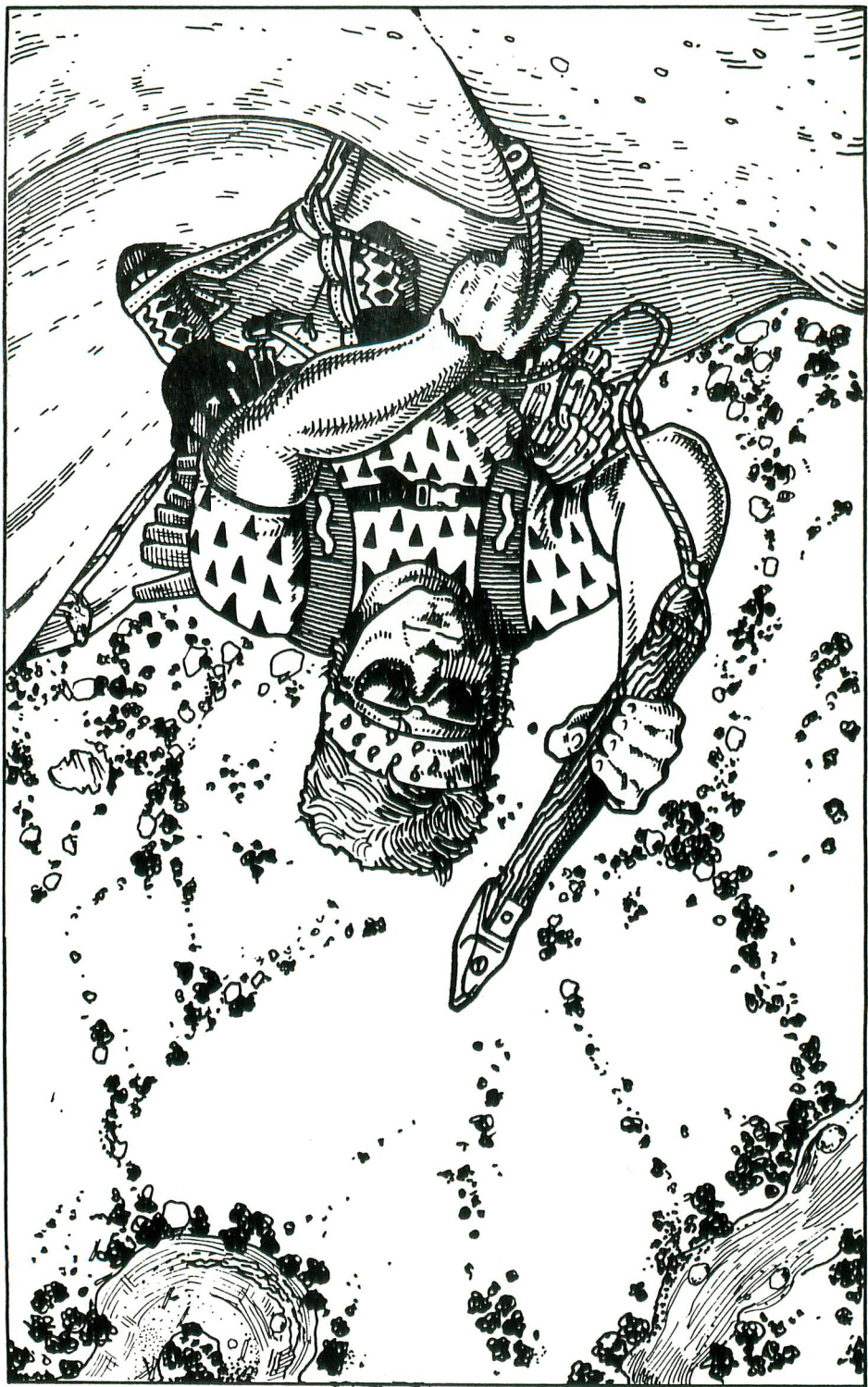
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1109 S. Plaza Way #286
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

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**Cover Photo by Bill Hatcher: Xaver
Bongard, first solo ascent of Jolly
Roger (5.10, A5).**



Introduction

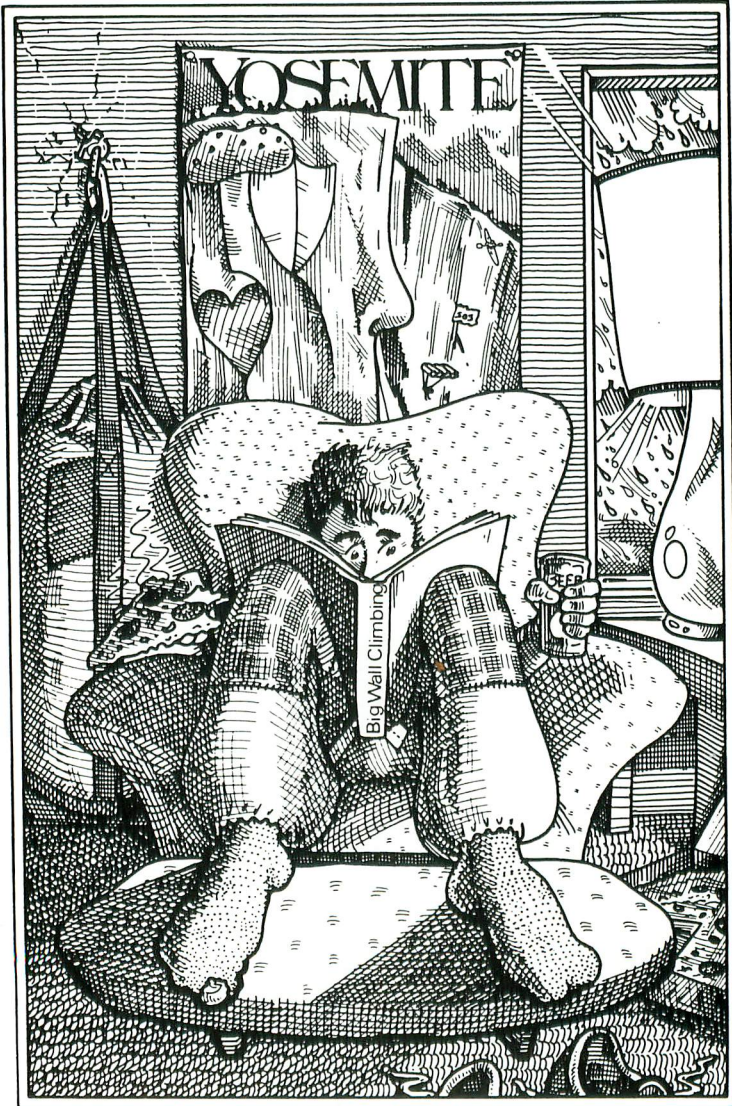
Big-wall climbs are guaranteed adventure. Climbing all day on technical rock for many successive days, dealing with a multitude of physical and mental challenges, setting up belays and bivouacs, and finally reaching the summit makes for an unforgettable experience. The unique state of mind achieved during multiple day big-wall ascents is so incredible that it is impossible to describe its essence on paper or otherwise; save it to say, however, that the motivations behind big wall climbs are more than just "because it is there"...

In this manual, Section I discusses the gear required for big-wall ascents, Section II describes some of the techniques, and Section III covers some miscellaneous big-wall topics. Appendix One is about getting started with aid climbing, and Appendix Two lists some recommended Yosemite wall routes. In general, this manual is geared towards big-wall climbing in Yosemite, undoubtedly the "big-wall capital of the world". This manual is not intended to be a guide for either beginner or expert. Rather, it is an attempt merely to review modern wall methods; many of the subjects covered will be a matter of opinion, of course, and no claim of absolute authority is made. It does, however, describe a workable wall system. It also assumes a basic knowledge of climbing: knots, placing protection, etc. Note: in most cases, the information assumes a nailing-wall, as opposed to a clean (i.e. hammerless) wall.



Dedication

Dedicated to the folks in Yosemite who revealed to me some of the finer qualities of life. To name a few: Werner Braun (commitment), Mike Corbett (perseverance), Dave Schultz (inspired energy), Walt Shipley (semi-controlled boldness), John Bachar (optimization of ability), Charles III (competitiveness), Fish (twisted humor), Willie-jo, Grant Hiskes, John Dill, Alex Lowe, John Barbella, Tucker Tech, Rudy mama, Scott Cosgrove, Scotty, Doe, Bush-cat, Dimitri, The General, Jo-mama, José,



Part I: Gear and Personal Accoutrements

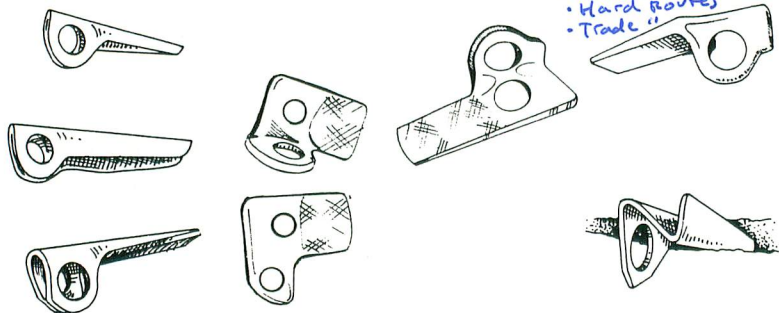
Hardware--Pitons

Better piton intro - catalog

The particular wall will determine the amount of hardware required. In general, if the route has had more than ten ascents, the gear-lists given in the Meyer's guide to Yosemite are excessive and should be modified. The Shield, for example, used to rely heavily on knifeblades, rurps, and lost arrows; now it demands more baby angles (1/2" and 5/8") and standards (3/4"). [note: for some of the more travelled routes, it is advisable to have some sawed-off 3/4" and 1" pins for shallow pin-scars. Saw a couple of inches off the length. One or two of each should be sufficient] The Shield in particular is an extreme example of beaten-out cracks: hand-placing 5/8" baby angles to the eye (in holes) is not uncommon in what was originally a knifeblade-size crack (the overall beauty of the route, however, is not detracted from too much).

Standard Piton Racks

- 1st Ascents
- Hard Routes
- Trade "



Large pitons can generally be cut down on, largely due to the advent of Friends. Other than on routes like Excaliber, where the wide-crack predominates, bongs are rarely needed. For most routes, three to five 1" pitons, two or three 1 1/4" pitons, one or two 1 1/2" pitons, and a bong (for luck) will generally suffice for the big stuff. This assumes a good selection of Friends: most commonly two or three sets up to #4, and perhaps an oversize (#5 or #7) for some routes (Wired Bliss's "Big Buds" are the best).

A couple of Leeper Z-pins are very handy to have on most routes. Although some people like to use them independently, Leepers can be stacked with an angle for a shallow or slightly oversize pin placement.

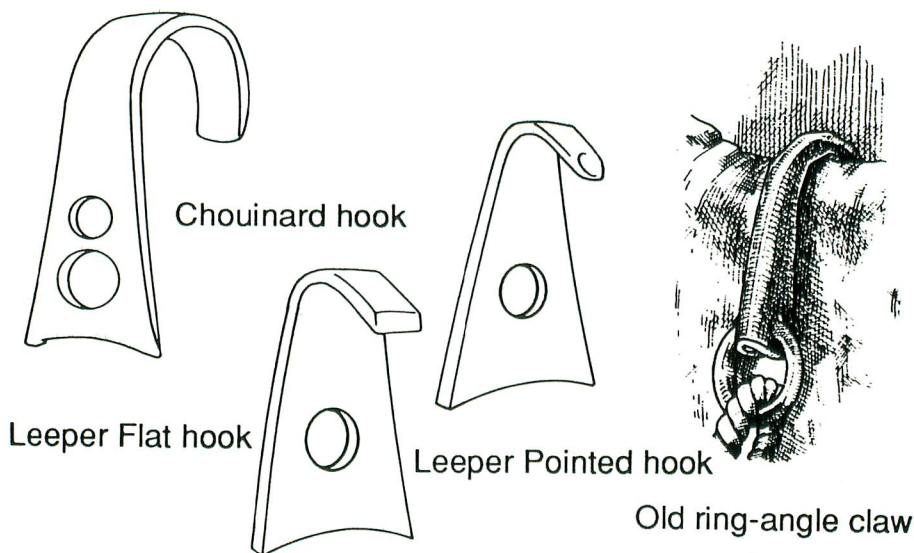
A wall evolves with each successive ascent: pieces get fixed, placements become more obvious and simple, loose rock gets removed (heh-heh), etc. In general, walls become easier with use and the gear-lists change accordingly. For specific information on Yosemite routes, consult the experts in the Camp IV parking lot.

"When on the big stones, make sure you're tooled up to the gills." -- Jim Gaun

Hooks

There are basically three types of hooks: (1) the Chouinard, (2) the Leeper Logan (flat and pointed), and (3) the ring-angle claw.

The Chouinard hook is the classic, most used hook; even the easiest nailing routes usually require at least two of them. As with all hooks, bring along extra because they're frequently dropped. For some routes (such as Zenyatta Mendatta), "pointed Chouinards" are necessary--this entails filing down the end of the hook into a sharp point (imagine a 45 degree triangular point). These hooks are used in enhanced hook placements--where a shallow 1/4" hole has been drilled in a horizontal or sloping shelf to allow the hook to "catch".



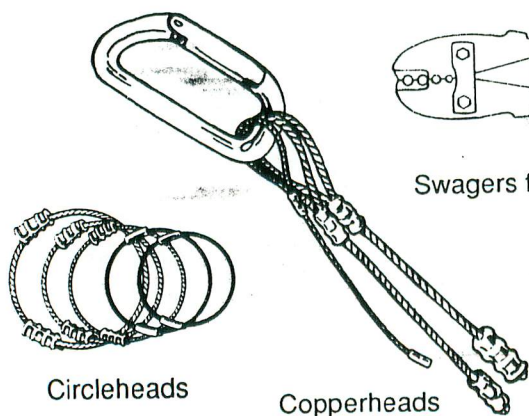
Leeper hooks are essential in some situations. The flat-Leepers are very stable and secure on certain narrow edges where a Chouinard would "rock" (very frightening). On thin low-angle slab climbing, a filed flat-Leeper (where half of the hooking edge is filed off) can be very useful. The pointed-Leepers also have a multitude of uses, most notably for bat-hooking; in fact, they work so well in 1/4" holes that it is hard to believe that they weren't designed for that purpose. Sometimes a slight tap sets the hook nicely while bat-hooking, but beware, if you pound them in, they are likely to spring out suddenly.

} change

Ring-angle claws derive their name from the old style of these previously hard-to-find large hooks. Years ago, one would have to search desperately for a particular long, soft-iron, ring-angle piton and bend it into the proper shape (this took some practice, moreover). Professional models (such as the FishHook) are now available. These hooks are essential on some routes, their use ranging from hooking large, two-inch-thick detached flakes to hooking a large solid shelf. They are essentially an enlarged version of the regular hook. For some routes, several sizes may be required.

Copperheads

Copperheads (or "mashheads") are specialty big-wall items, which are mashed into shallow grooves or pockets as aid placements. They are generally handmade, and available from many sources (often available in the Camp IV lot for the best prices). If you're worried about quality, buy a Nikkoproress gauge for a couple dollars and make sure the swage meets sizing specifications (this will guarantee strength). Also make sure that the doubled-back wire just peeks out of the swage (if it comes out too far, it will fray and catch on slings). You can also make your own for about thirty cents each in materials, but a good swager will cost \$150.



Swagers for making copperheads

Circleheads

Copperheads

-no #0

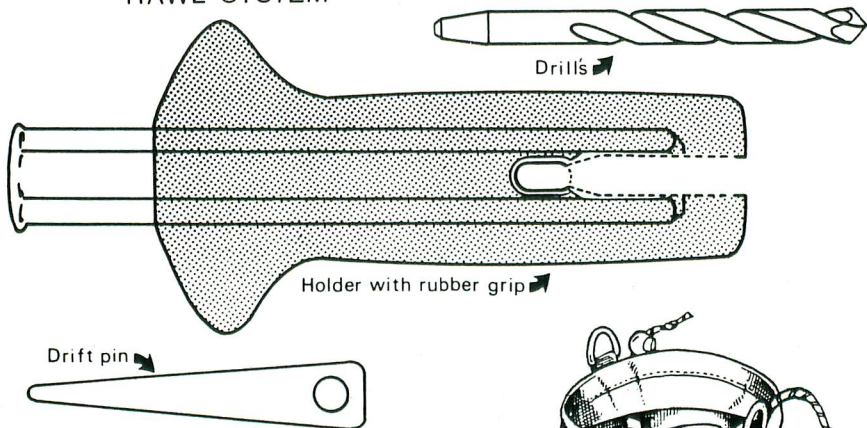
Sizing: ~~#0~~ (tiny), #1 (small), #2 (about the diameter of a cigarette), #3 (medium), #4 and #5 (cowheads--up to 1/2" diameter). The #0's have a cable that will just about hold a gymnast and aren't really used much. For a given number of required heads, unless specified otherwise, I would say a good proportion would be 10% #1's, 35% #2's (a useful size), 25% #3's, and 30% of the larger sizes.

Aluminum is often used for the larger heads (#3 and up); they are usually more secure (especially in softer rock) than their copper counterparts. They are not very durable, however; alumi-heads sometimes survive only one or two placements before they're rendered useless.

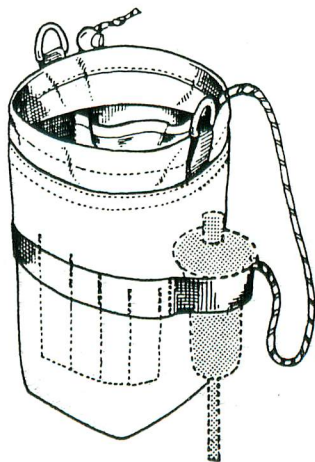
Bolting Gear

A small bolt-kit is nice to have for any route of medium or harder difficulty. Uses include replacing a bad belay bolt, setting a bivouac rivet, or drilling emergency anchors for retreating. A couple of 1/4" drills, drill holder, drift pin, and a few 1/4" bolts with hangers should be ample (note: some routes, such as Never-Never Land, have hangerless bolts at the belays--for these routes, bring five or six hangers). Also include some 1/4" coarse-thread nuts and a wrench for the occasional barren thread-head Rawldrive.

RAWL SYSTEM



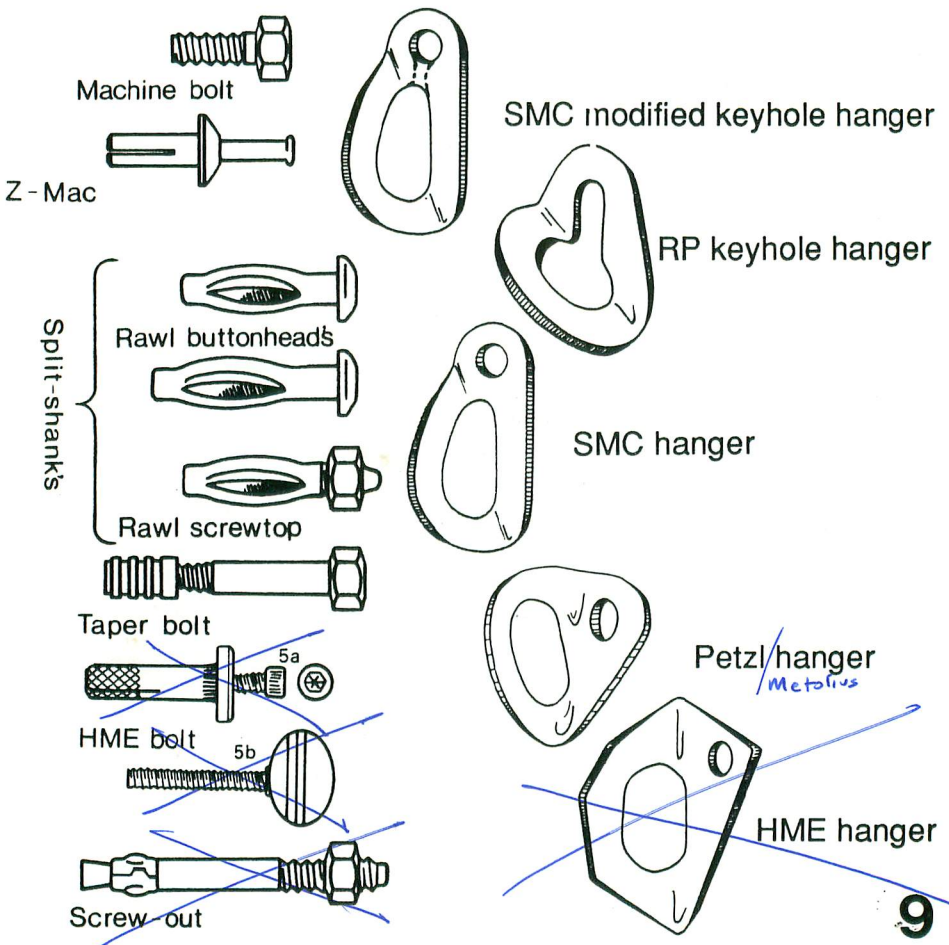
A5 BOLT BAG

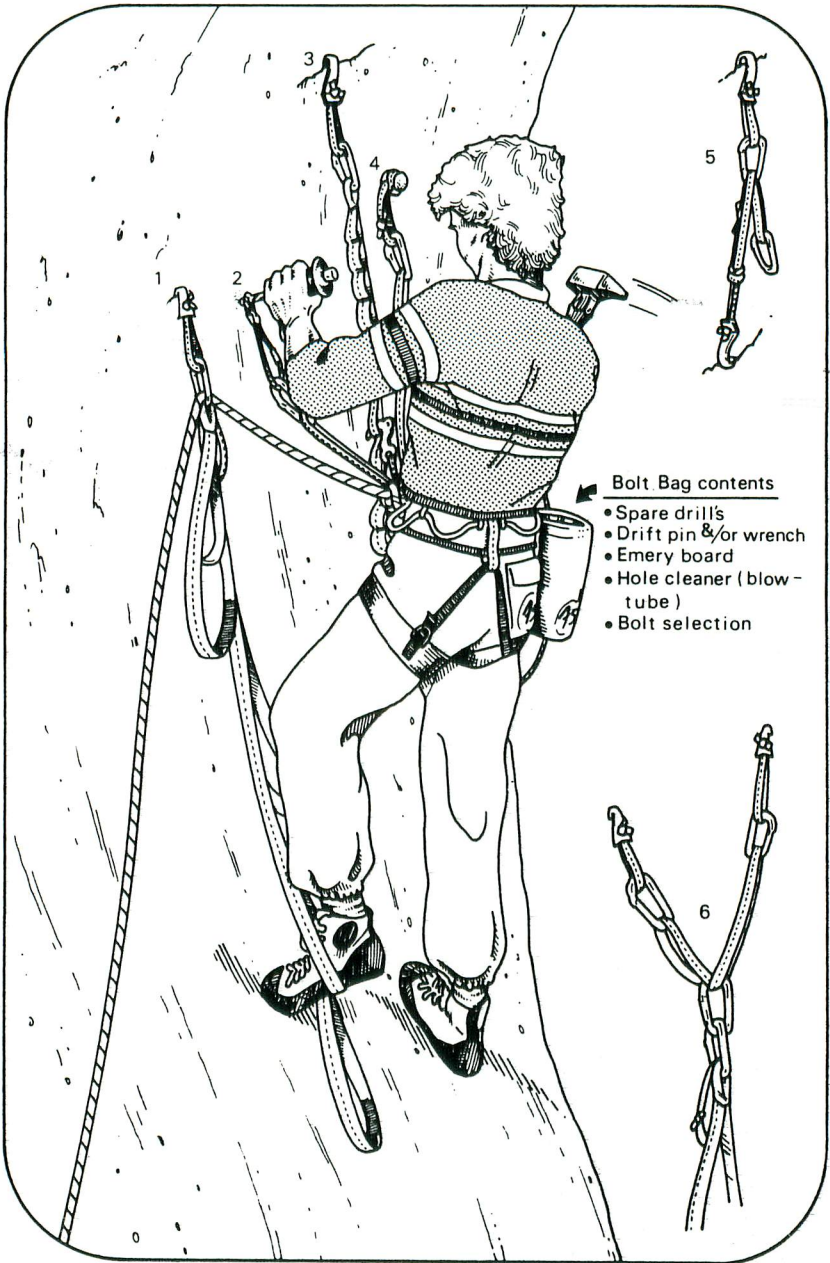


Rivets: 5/16" diameter, 3/4" long, coarse-thread, grade 5 machine bolts can be hammered securely in 1/4" holes ~~1/4"~~ ^{17/64"} (slightly oversize 1/4") drill is perfect--otherwise some hammering or filing down of the rivet threads may be necessary].

Rivet Hangers: Wired stoppers work well as rivet hangers. Simply push the nut down the cable and presto. One-half inch tie-off sling also works. For shorter length, specially-made rivet hangers can be fashioned out of a swaged wire loop (see diagram). Note: rumor has it that the Dawn Wall requires #1 thin-wired rivet hangers because the rivets are nearly flush with the wall. Do the Dawn

Keyhole Hangers: Keyhole hangers can be fitted over a bolt-stud, such as a Rawl buttonhead. They can be made from any hanger (thick 3/8" SMC hangers work well) simply by filing a connecting slot from the carabiner hole to the bolt hole. Australian RP-type hangers work well as keyhole hangers for the larger head machine bolts.

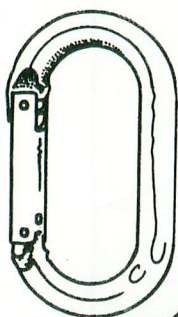




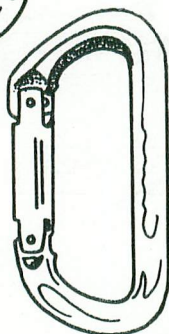
TRADITIONAL BOLTING TECHNIQUE (With aid)

Free 'Biners

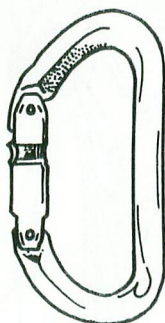
Walls tend to use a lot of carabiners. It seems that one can start a pitch with a ton of free biners (those not used for racking purposes) and still run out, forcing him to "scarf" biners from other parts of the rack--there never seems to be enough. As a general guideline, a total of 80 carabiners should be considered a minimum for most nailing routes, some of the harder ones requiring up to 150 (i.e. when many placements have to be equalized, etc.).



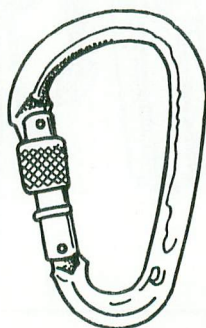
Oval carabiner



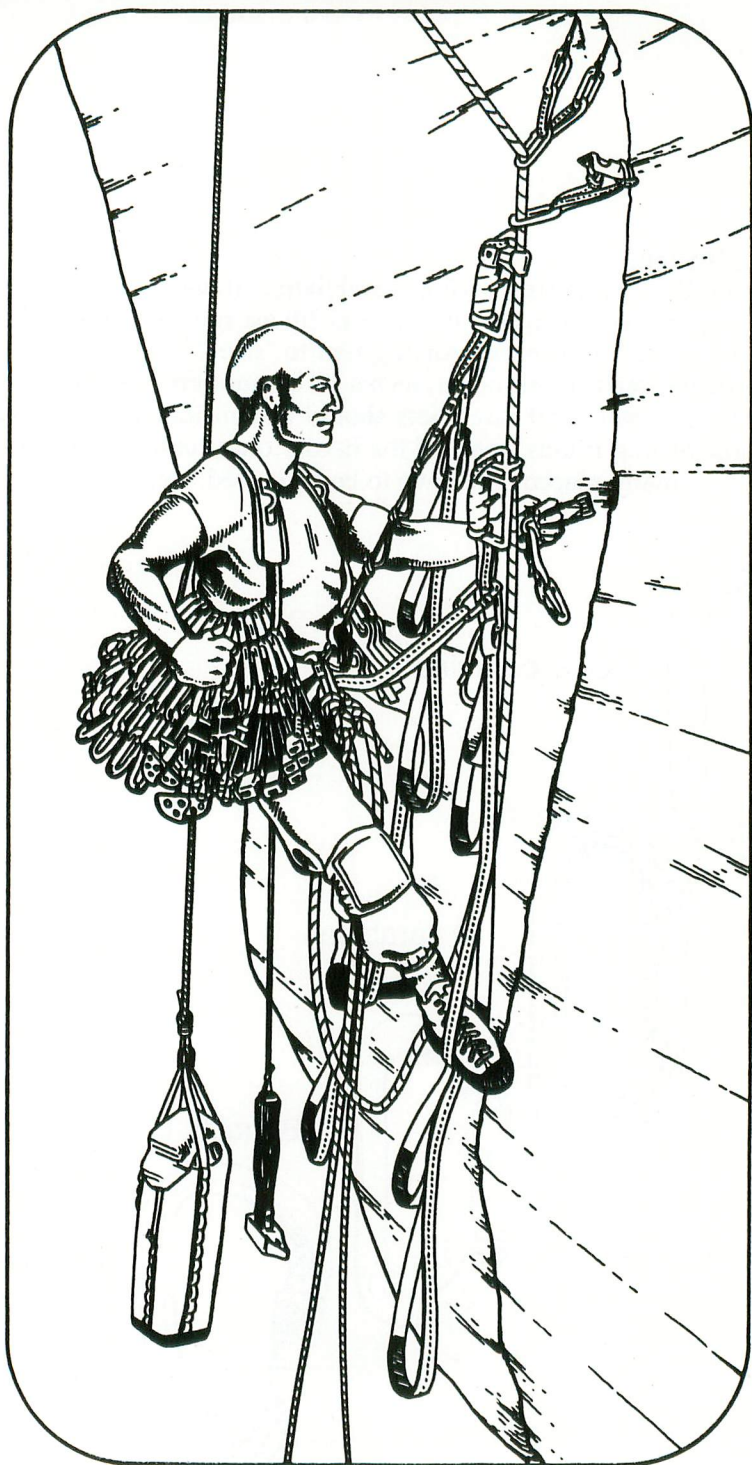
D carabiner



Bonaitti D carabiner



Locking
perabiner



Friends

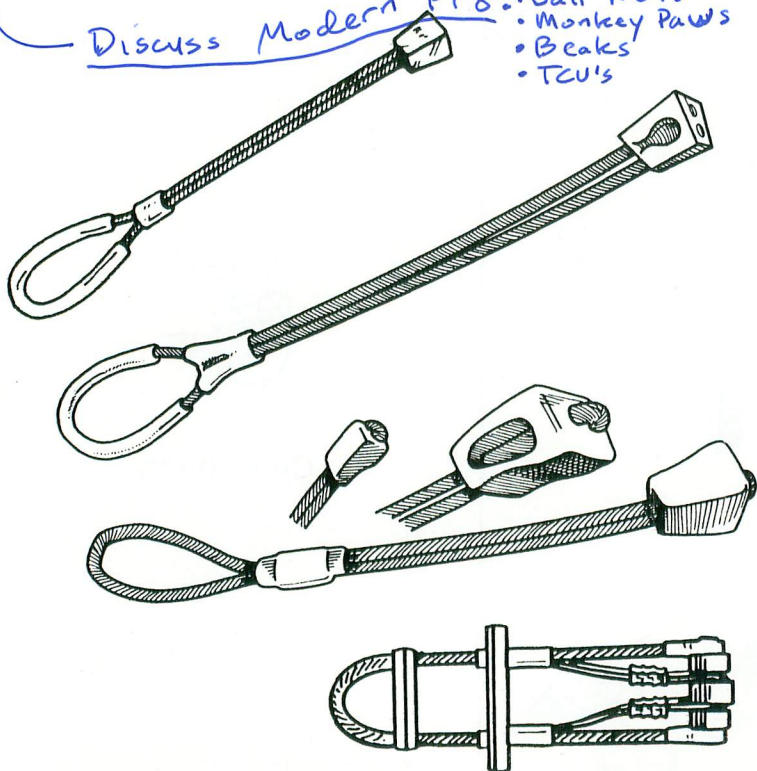
Indispensable on walls. Probably the greatest energy-saving device for wall climbers ever invented. The ease of their placement and removal speeds things up considerably (impressive note: Mead Hargis and John Roskelley made a quick 2 1/2 day ascent of the the N.A. Wall ^{before} without Friends). As said before, two or three sets are nice to have on most walls, possibly more, depending on the nature of the wall and the amount of "leapfrogging" a climber is willing to do. Half-sizes are very handy, too. More than two #4's are rarely required.

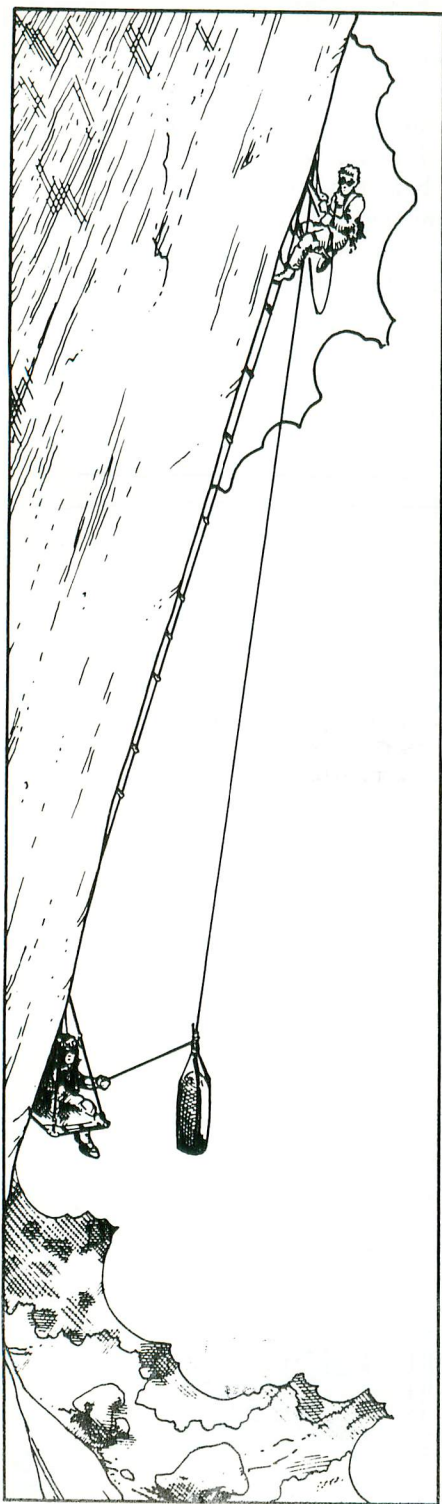
Miscellaneous Hardware

A total of about thirty wired stoppers (and hexes) of various sizes, and at least two or three sets of Brass nuts (down to #0) is an adequate "wired" rack for most routes. ~~Quickies are also very useful for aid climbing (in fact, the Atlantic Ocean Wall requires a #2 Quickie).~~ Wired Bliss TCU's, Lowe tri-cams, and HB nuts are good items in an arsenal, too. Walt Shipley swears by a set of hexes on every wall. In general, it is a good idea to have as great a variety of gear possible, since each type of gear may be the best (maybe even the only thing) for that certain placement.

Discuss Modern Pro:

- Ball Nuts
- Monkey Paws
- Beaks
- TCU's





Ropes

Needless to say, the lead-line should be in good shape. Walls tend to be harsh on ropes, especially while going over edges and being jumared on (a common occurrence). 11.5mm ropes are comforting. Haul lines are less critical--either a 9mm or an old 11mm can be used. Static line is most efficient for hauling; no stretch. A third line can have many uses (see Techniques).

(Fourth Line)



Clove hitch

Left: Lowering out the haulbag.

Tie-offs

Depending on the wall, anywhere from ten to over a hundred tie-offs may be required (they tend to get trashed on some placements; for example, when tying off a piton in a corner). One-half inch tubular webbing is standard. Loops ranging from five to seven inches in diameter seem to be the most versatile (requiring about 24" of material each). *check this.*

Runners

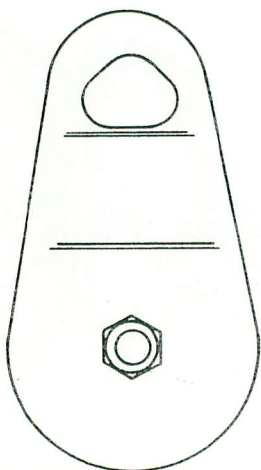
Many slings are required to keep rope-drag to a minimum. Also used to equalize belay anchors. 9/16" supertape slings tied a little shorter than regular length runners, and carried on a biner on the rack (instead of around the neck) are excellent runners. These can be doubled through the eye of a piton, thus saving a carabiner. *also short supertape tie-offs list sling-types*

Fall Arrests

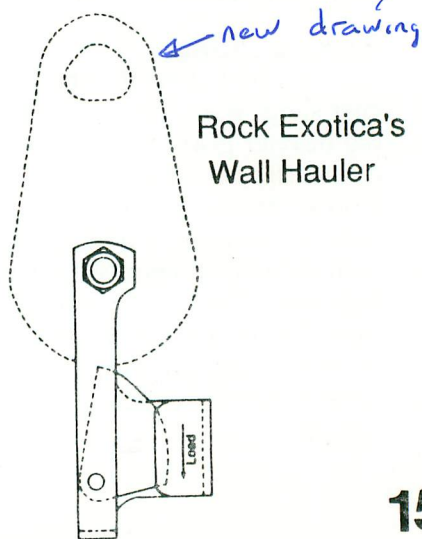
~~Surprisingly, Air Voyagers and the like haven't really caught on in wall-climbing as much as they deserve. I find them very reassuring on that relatively-secure-but somewhat-dubious piece in the midst of a long string of body-weight placements.~~

Pulleys

A good, efficient pulley is essential. The red or blue SARA rescue pulleys are very reliable. Ever since I dropped a pulley and had to haul the remainder of the wall through a carabiner (probably a thousand times the effort), I always bring a spare of some sort. New self camming hauling pulleys are now available, such as Rock Exotica's "Wall Hauler"; these are incredibly convenient devices eschewing the need to rig a jumar into each haul system.



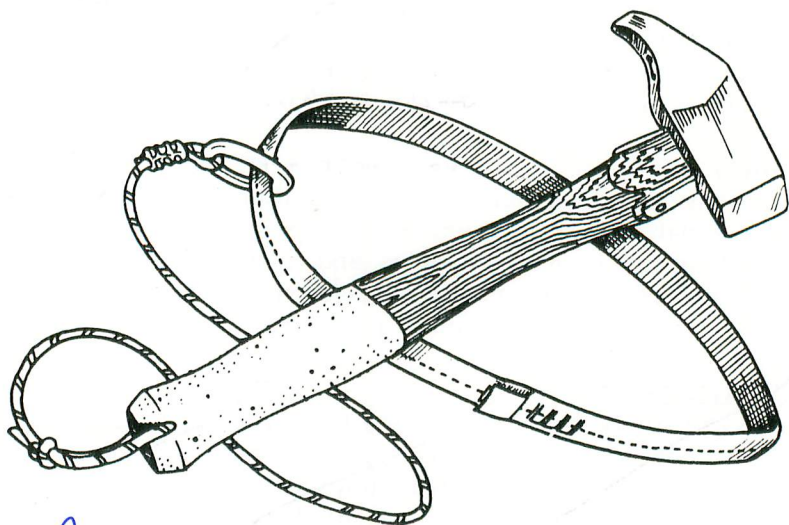
Sara rescue pulley



Rock Exotica's
Wall Hauler

Hammers

An A5 hammer, with its hefty weight, copperheading pick, and carabiner hole is the recommended big-wall hammer.



Hammer Holsters

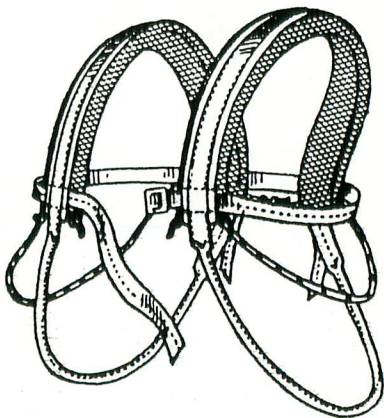
A soft hammer holster is best because it doesn't dig into your flesh during belays and bivouacs.

Haulbags

Many types are available. Make sure that the material is both tough *and* abrasion resistant (these do not always go hand-in-hand). Padded carrying straps are nice for the approaches. I've always found that the stout, wide haulbags were far easier to get in and out of (and pack) than the long, narrow ones.

Racking Slings

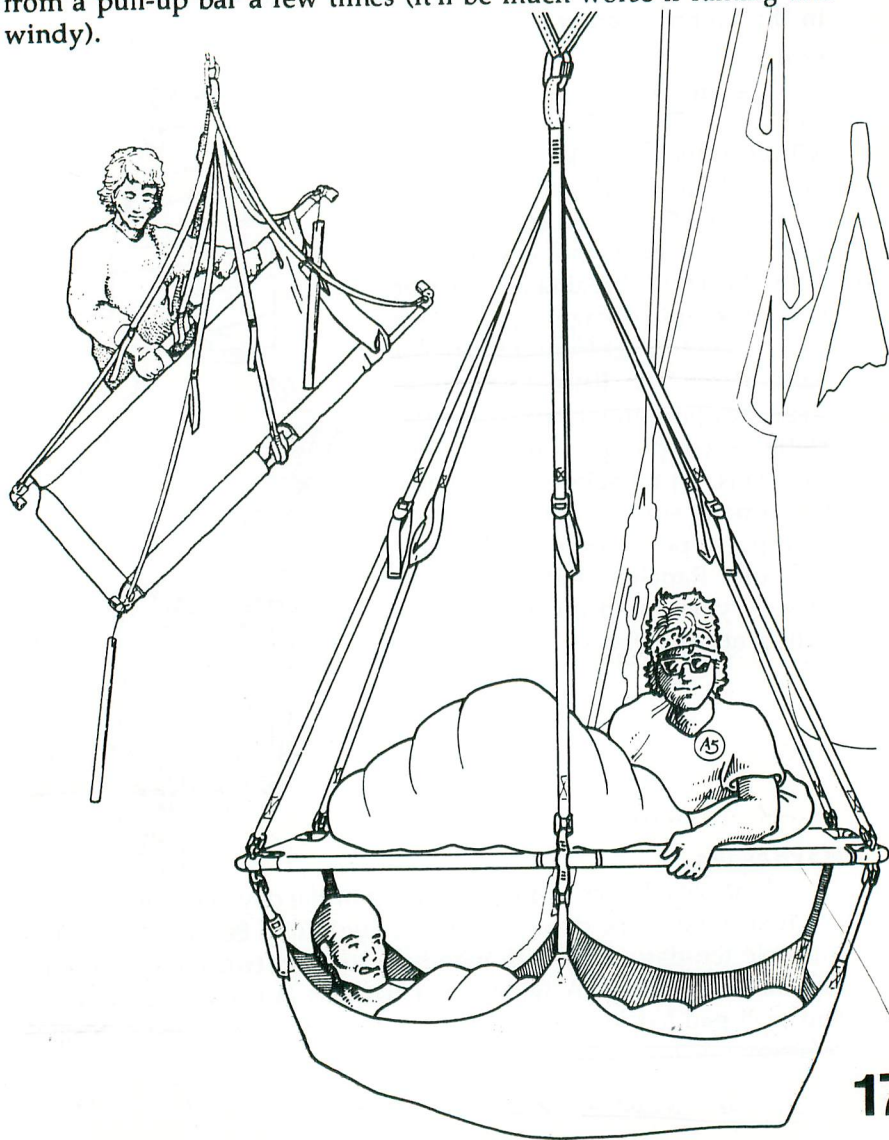
Without a doubt, the "double gear sling" is a great innovation for the heavier gear loads. No longer is the climber strangled by gear-slings crisscrossing his neck; instead, two padded slings sit on each shoulder connected in the back and front. The most versatile have two loops on each side (for maximum organization) and strong tie-in loops for clipping the entire rack in.



Porta-ledges

Many types of porta-ledges are on the market--some are excellent, some are poor. In order of importance, a good porta-ledge will be (1) stable while set up (i.e. does not tend to twist, "hourglass", or "parallelogram"--this usually requires rigid corner sections), (2) easy to adjust while in it (and beware, many of the adjusting systems slip, especially when wet, causing the entire ledge to twist out of shape), (3) easy to set up, (4) lightweight, and (5) roomy enough for lounging.

A good heavy-duty rainfly is essential; in general, *always* expect a storm and practice setting up the whole system hanging from a pull-up bar a few times (it'll be much worse if raining and windy).

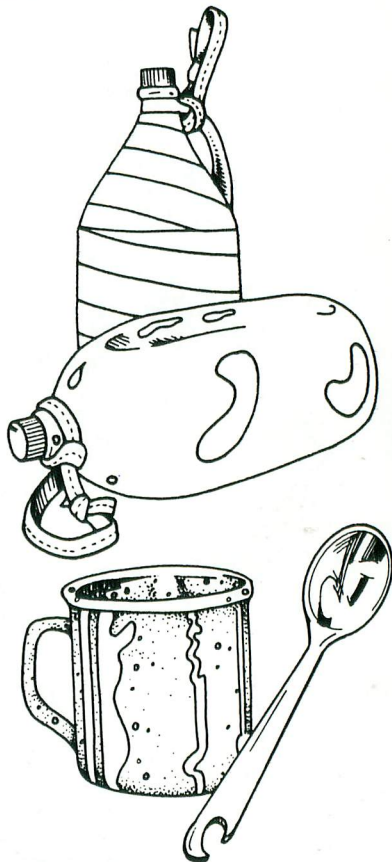


Water Bottles

Any high-grade plastic jugs will work. They tend to get a lot of abuse while in the haul-bag; any not up to par will make itself noticed as you helplessly watch the wet-spot grow on the side of the haul-bag. I prefer the thick polypropylene gallon size (available from chemical supply shops), duct-taped to the hilt (taping the tops on for the initial packing in the haul-bag, too). Two-liter plastic soda bottles are great (they're impossible to break, or even blow the top off--try it). Rinsing chemical bottles with baking soda can diminish poisoning. Make sure to have a clip-in loop on all water bottles. Fern Springs on the Southside Drive (in Yosemite) is good water. Bring at least one-half gallon per person per day, and more in the hotter weather.

Food

A matter of preference, of course. For a five-day wall, I would typically take five or six cans of dinners (lasagne, spaghetti, beans, etc.), three or four cans of fruit, a box of Familia to mix in with the fruit (breakfast), four or five packages of bagels and cream cheese (not forgetting to grab a handful of those little packages of Grey Poupon mustards from the Deli), a couple packages of Fig Neutrons, and a selection of candy bars (make sure to get the sealed-wrapper type). Some hard candy (i.e. Jolly Rancher's) are also good to keep your mind off water while sitting at the belays.



Harnesses

Since one hangs in a harness most of the day, a comfortable one is a luxury not to be done without (though John Barbellow has done multiple ten-day walls with merely a doubled two-inch swami and one-inch leg-loops). A wide waist harness (4-6") with gear loops, and well padded leg-loops make for a good harness. ~~Don't forget a belay seat of some sort.~~

18

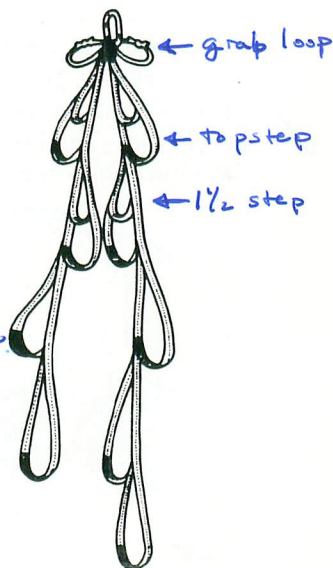
Belay Seats → Discuss ledge set-up. Otherwise belay-seat

→ 4 step/5 step system.

Aiders

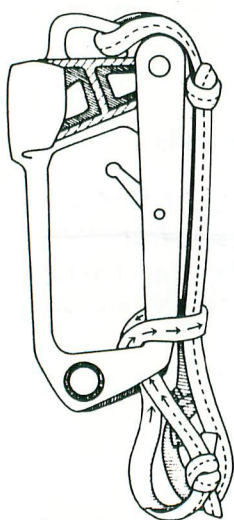
reinforced
step

My favorite are the sewn, ~~rigid-step, four-step~~ aiders. Especially when it's windy and the aiders spend half their time whipping around your head, it's nice to have a rigid opening to throw your foot into. I use four aiders--two on each biner. Aiders can also be knotted from one-inch webbing--these have the advantage of being custom designed (perfect sizing requires some experimentation).

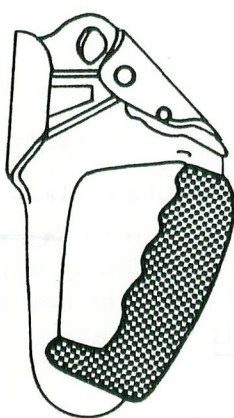


Jumars Ascenders

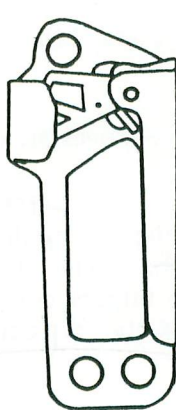
Three main types: Jumar, Clog, and CMI's. The CMI's are the strongest, but you need the fingers of Houdini to work the triggering mechanism. Jumars and Clogs are easier, and probably more comfortable, too. It's all a matter of preference. See diagram for rigging the Jumar-type jumars. → Rewrite



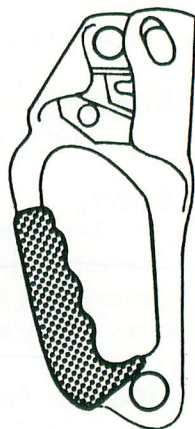
Jumar



Clog



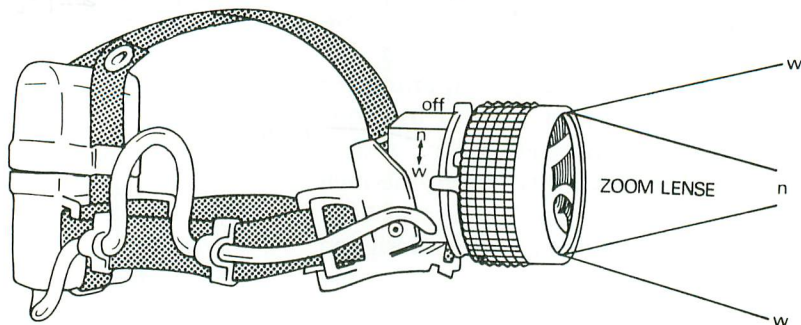
CMI



Petzl

Headlamps

✓ Essential for setting up that bivy in the dark. The preferred headlamp fits entirely on your head without a separate battery pack (besides getting caught on everything, the wires invariably have a built-in instinct to strangle). I've found Lithium to be unreliable. The best headlamp is the Petzl Zoom with the 4.5 volt flat (European-type) alkaline battery.



Shoes

✓ Robbin's wall boots are still the standard (but unavailable). Any shoe can be used, but a wall will pretty much demolish most tennis shoes: a good lightweight hiking boot is preferred. The Nike Lava-domes are incredibly durable--I have a pair that's survived four walls--plus they have a semi-rigid sole for comfort in the slings. Resole with climbing rubber for the ultimate wall boot. A comfortable pair of free-climbing shoes for the occasional free-climbing section is a good option. Tie-in loops strung through an eyelet is convenient for clipping in your shoes at night--if you drop your only shoes, you can kiss your feet goodbye.

Kneepads

Nice to have--knees are constantly battered on walls.

Gloves

For protecting hands, *especially when cleaning pitches,* gloves are a must (~~I only use them while cleaning a pitch~~). The thin, tight-fitting leather (goat-skin) gloves--with the fingers cut off above the first knuckle--are the best. Trucker's specials ←

Sleeping Bag

Synthetic insulation. A clip-in loop sewed on is nice.

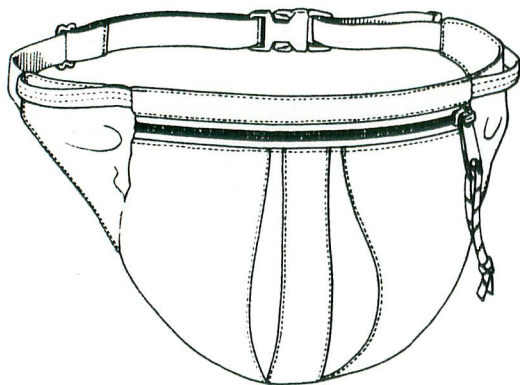
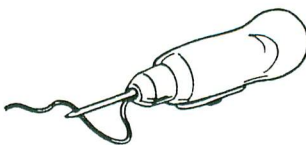
Rain Gear and Extra (warm) Clothing: "Check".

Miscellaneous

Stuff sacks are great for organizing food and bivy gear. Sew clip-in loops on. Also bring some cloth tape for gobs, a speedy stitcher for fabric repairs, perhaps some duct-tape for emergency repairs, aspirin for that morning hand cramp, and of course, a can opener (best: a swiss army knife) and the spoon. ~~Don't forget the topo!~~

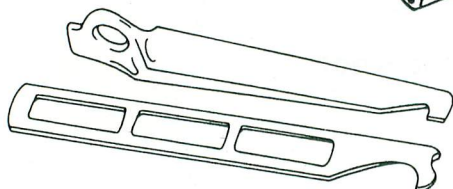
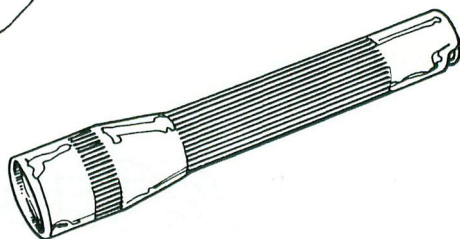
Accoutrements

Speedy Stitcher

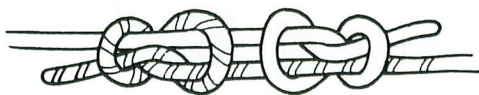


A5 Buddy Bag

Mini-mag Flashlight



Cleaning Tools



Grapevine Knot

Part II: Techniques

Basic Systems

The basic wall system generally requires three ropes: a lead line (11mm or 11.5mm), a haul line (9mm to 11mm), and a lower-out line (9mm preferred--optional for many routes). Assume: Bert and Ernie on the "big stone".

- 1) Bert leads, Ernie belays.
- 2) Bert finishes pitch, sets up new belay, prepares to haul.
- 3) Ernie releases haulbag from his belay (if need be, lowering it out with the lower-out line), Bert hauls it.
- 4) Ernie cleans pitch (jumaring). *re racks*
- 5) Ernie arrives at Bert's belay, prepares to lead.
- 6) Ernie leads, Bert belays.

Repeat until dark (bivy) or until topped out.

With three people, many systems are possible. After a pitch is led, one man will clean the pitch while the third man jumars a free-hanging rope (either before or after the bag is hauled, depending on system used). It is usually most efficient to have the person who jumared the free-hanging rope start to lead the next pitch while the previous pitch is still being cleaned (this may require a slightly larger rack; more gear can be sent up to the leader, however, after it is cleaned).

Leading: General Techniques

Haulbag Cleverness is an asset on walls; good judgement and innovative thinking are in constant demand up there. Besides the main challenge of a successful ascent, a wall offers a continual set of minor challenges, each one unique, and each one requiring a slightly different solution. With experience, one learns the "tricks of the trade" (mostly through trial and error) and the complex task of wall climbing becomes more second nature. One develops an eye for a placement, an innate ability to deal with multiple ropes, slings, aiders, pins, biners, etc., and an awareness of the interrelationship among the climbing gear, the stone, and upward progress.

While preparing for a nailing lead, it is a good idea to first look at the line and mentally calculate a general plan, i.e. how slings will be running so as to minimize rope drag, or how, for example, some of a certain size piton should be saved for a latter section. Don't ever trust the topo, as it is merely a general guideline and by no means exact. Overall efficiency becomes the name of the game, and accurate judgement is required.

except for Walt Shipley's fine Topos (the new standard in Topos)

drawing of rack organized

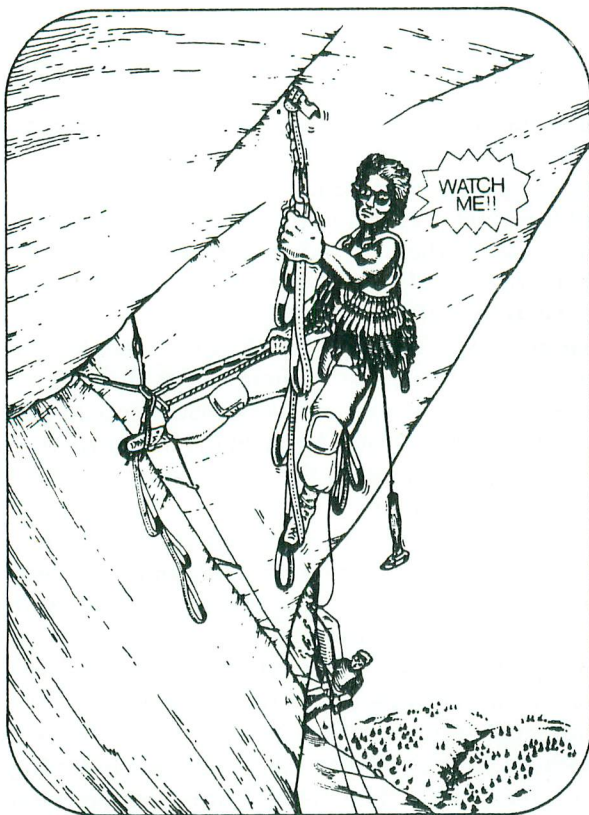
Gear: Proper organization of gear while preparing a lead is all important. With double gear slings, racking has become both simple and comfortable. An idea: rack pins (5 to 6 knifeblades per biner, 4 to 5 Lost Arrows per biner, 3 to 4 baby angles per biner, and 2 to 3 angles per biner), slings, and tie-offs on the right side; Friends, wired stoppers, copperheads, ~~and hooks~~ on the left side; and then distribute the free biners so as to equalize the weight on each side. However it is done, quick access requires a consistent, familiar system. Hooks and Beaks on Harness clip-loops (why)

Sling use: Slings reduce rope drag, save biners, prevent the rope from going over sharp edges, and equalize belay anchors. Carrying slings on carabiners on the rack (instead of around the shoulder) is quite convenient as it keeps them out-of-the-way and yet fairly accessible. 20 or 30 medium length 9/16" (supertape) slings, and 10 to 15 full-length 1" slings should be ample for most routes. Be aware of sharp edges while on lead, both for yourself and for your partner (who will be jumaring on those edges); slings usually solve this problem, but infrequently an edge will be so bad that an article of clothing must be shed and left securely in place to pad it. At belays, it's a good practice to equalize anchors with regular length 1" slings. Proper equalization distributes the load equally between two anchors, and is secure even if one of the two anchors fail. Drawing

Tie-off use: Tie-offs (short loops of 1/2" tubular webbing) reduce the leverage on pitons which "bottom out". An overhand knot can be used to tie pitons off, but a clove hitch can be quicker and a lot easier to untie afterwards. A longer "keeper sling" tie-off looped through the eye and clipped in will prevent losing the pin if it pulls out (make sure the load is not on the keeper sling). drawing

Aiders: Two sets of aiders are handy (2 aiders on each biner). It's nice to have a "grab loop" and a sub-second step (drawing). For testing purposes, one of the two aiders should be longer (5-step). drawing

Daisys: A daisy chain acts as a secure tentacle--a cord and biner directly connecting the climber to a placement. Five millimeter perlon works well (doubled), knotted every foot or so and extending from one's harness to the tip of his/her reach. For the harder routes, two separate daisys are useful (different colors). Also, I'll usually have a fifi hook on a short supertape sling (proper adjustment necessary) tied directly to my harness. The usual procedure: a) place the next piece, b) clip in a set of aiders, c) clip in the daisy, d) test the piece, e) get on it, climb into the third step of the aiders, hook in the fifi and hang from it (note: a carabiner can take the place of a fifi, but the fifi is easier to hook in). After a drawing



momentary reprieve, decide what's required for the next placement, probably climb up the aiders some more (the daisy, clipped in short, can also be used on overhanging sections to lever in the topstepping climber), and repeat. With the daisy, the rope doesn't need to be clipped into a piece until one is ready to move off it (simplifying things and minimizing the potential length of fall).

Testing: There are two methods of moving onto dubious placements: (1) the "ease-onto-it" method, whereby the climber slowly eases his weight off the present piece and onto the next piece, hoping it will hold full body weight, and (2) the more recommended shock-test method, whereby the climber bounces his weight on the next piece (with the aiders and daisy clipped in--not the rope) slowly at first and gradually building up to forces exceeding body weight. Of major importance, of course, is preventing the present piece from getting shock-loaded if the tested piece does pull (requires care). Properly done, however, most placements can be tested to handle a small shock load. Of course, sometimes a dubious

piece can't or shouldn't be tested, or can only be mini-tested (long sideways placements, some roof placements, fragile hook placements); judgement is required. Testing in the midst of a string of dicey placements can be one of the scariest parts of wall climbing.

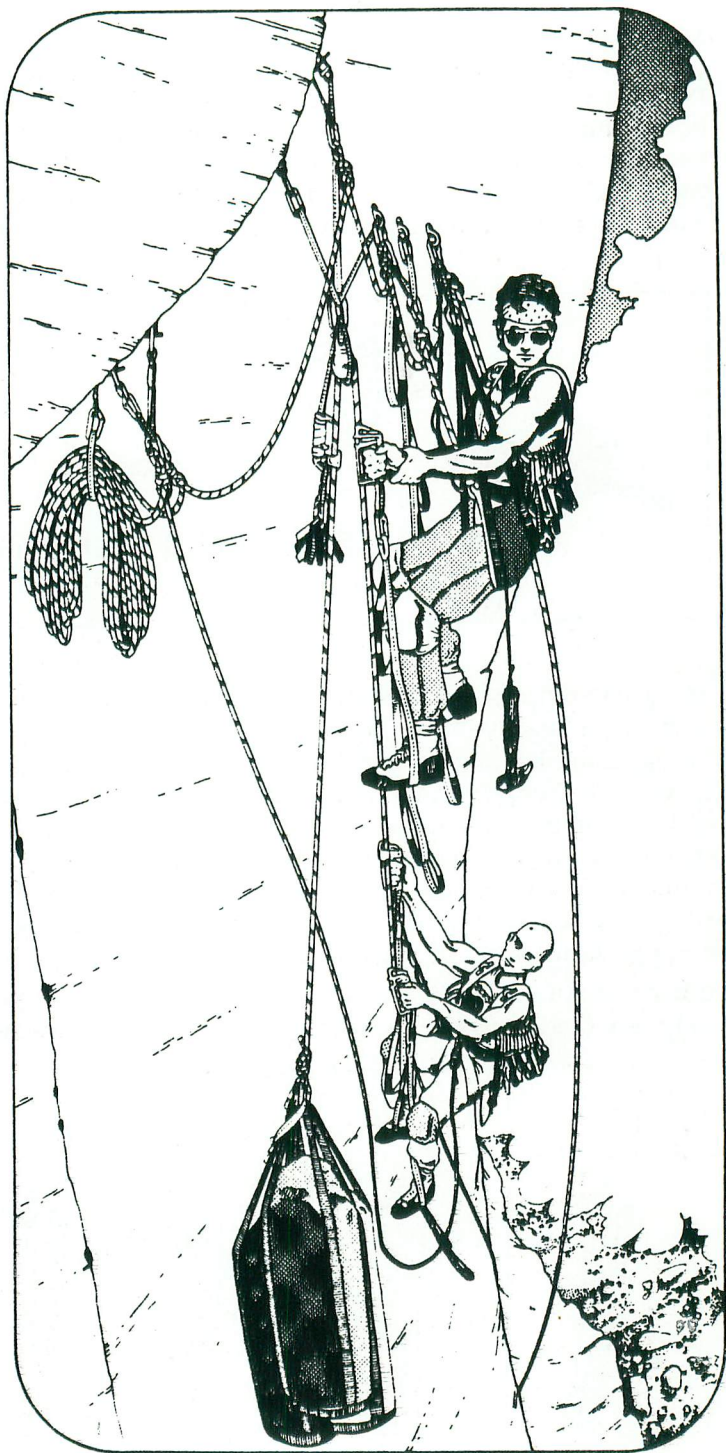
Free-climbing: Sometimes a leader is required to free-climb a section after aiding. To leave the security of the aiders is usually exciting, especially when the aiders must be retrieved for future use. Then the main difficulty is to keep from tripping over the aiders and the daisy (clip out of the way).

Cheater sticks: Though some consider cheater sticks unethical (?), it's all part of the game if their use is desired. Personally, I never use one because it's just an extraneous piece of gear which gets in the way and is seldom used. Some of the newer routes (such as Lost in America), however, require the use of "sticks", usually for sporty hooking past blank sections.

Belay set-ups: Once the belay is reached, it is important to keep organized, as things become increasingly complex. As belays are set up, keep in mind where your partner will be coming up, where the hauling will be done from, and where you'll be hanging from while your partner leads the next pitch. When the anchors are spread out, belay set-ups are simple, but when the anchors are bunched together, proper set-up can be tricky. Make sure to tie in with enough slack to be able to haul. I'll usually tie in with quite a few feet of slack, and then hang from a jumar attached to the anchored rope and clipped directly into my harness. I'll use this same jumar to haul with, then later clip my butt-bag(belay seat) to the jumar and hang from that (making things adjustable). Clipping the daisy into part of the belay will act as a back-up. While belaying, a jumar can be used as a third hand for holding the belay rope.

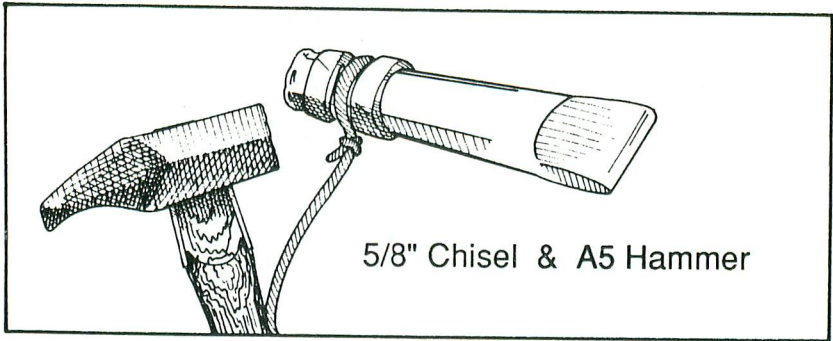
Having a rigid porta-ledge set-up makes for luxurious belays. Or, a comfortable seat can be fashioned out of a two-foot square piece of plywood (padded) with two holes drilled in the corners of one side, and one hole drilled in the center of the other side. Rig with slings (center sling should be adjustable).

(and where
many falls
occur)



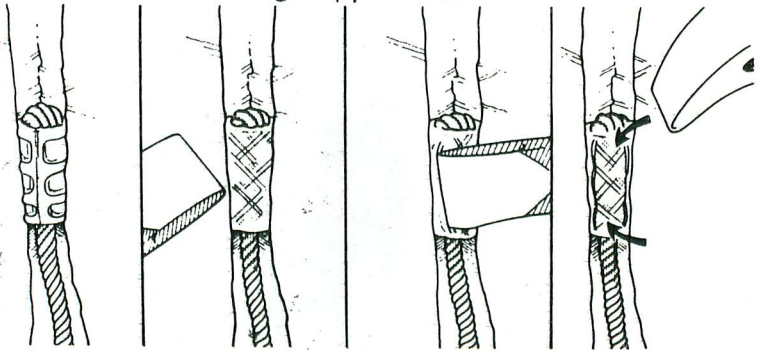
Leading: Specific Techniques

Copperheading: Intricate copperheading is an art, learned through experience. A tool is frequently needed for the smaller heads (for larger copper-(or alumi-)heads, the pointed end of the hammer is often effective). Lost Arrows work okay for placing copperheads; personally, I use a blunted 5/8" chisel (never for enhancement) tied to a long sling. For most placements, the old "X-



em, paste-em, rock-em, sniff-em" technique is adequate [X-em: embed the head with multiple cross-hatched blows; paste-em: pin the right and left side in; rock-em: hit the top and bottom and watch to see if it "rocks"; and finally, sniff-em, and "if it stinks, get off it!"]. To remove, connect a sling from the copperhead to the hammer (having a hole in the hammer head simplifies this), and swing upwards, jerking it out. For some heads, a biner-chain instead of a sling may be required; it's a considerate practice, however, to leave a copperhead fixed in place if it looks like the wire will rip out, otherwise, an unsightly blob of metal would remain in possibly the only spot (and must later be tediously cleaned out by the next party).

Placing copperheads



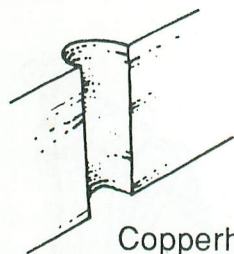
Place

X-em

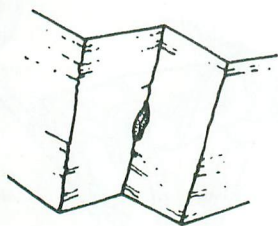
Paste-em

Rock-em

Fuckness Device



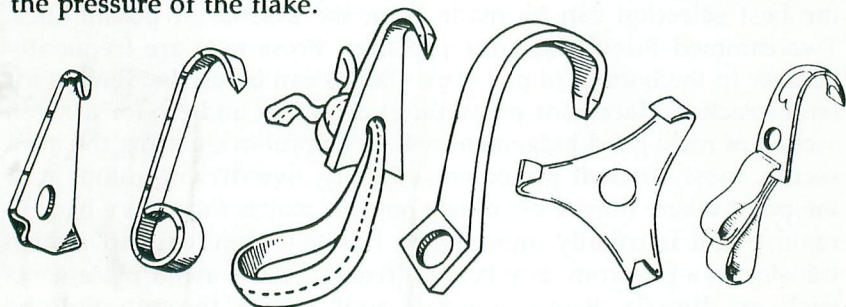
Copperhead Placements



Expanding Head Placement

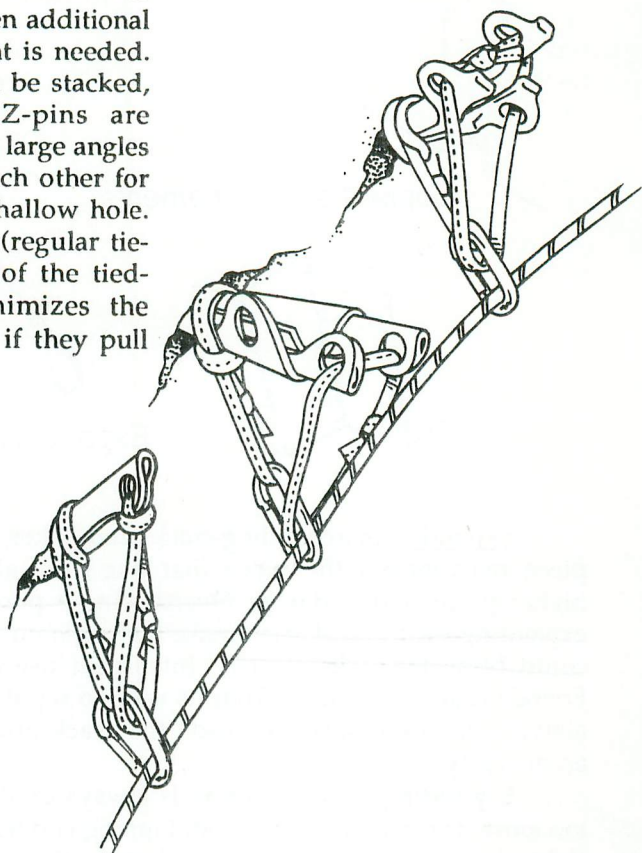
Expando: In expanding cracks and flakes, placing a successive piece may loosen the piece that one's on--always clip into the higher piece with a daisy. ~~Overdriving a piton at the start of an expanding section will often make the section more secure (though it could blow the flake apart).~~ Intelligent use of pitons, nuts and Friends reduces expando from its voodoo reputation to a fairly sane activity; it's necessary to "read" the crack and make judgements accordingly.

Expanding copperheading is always exciting: when a flake is too loose or too thin to be nailed, tapping copperheads deep into the flake and weighting them until they (hopefully) catch is the technique. The copperheads act as stoppers, being held in mostly by the pressure of the flake.



Hooking: A familiarity of the various hook types and a knowledge of where each will be best is essential. Practice on the boulders (preferably not the chalked ones) to get a feeling for hooks. When hooking, always keep a daisy connected to the hook/aider so it doesn't blow away or become lost in case of a fall.

Stacked pins: Pitons sometimes need to be stacked when additional tension for a placement is needed. Blades and arrows can be stacked, angles and Leeper Z-pins are commonly stacked, and large angles can be stacked with each other for placement in a large shallow hole. Tying a "keeper sling" (regular tie-off) through the eyes of the tied-off stacked pins minimizes the chance of losing them if they pull out.



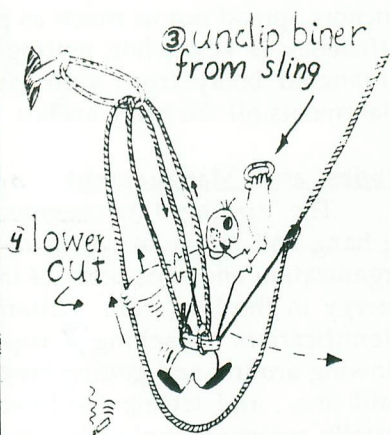
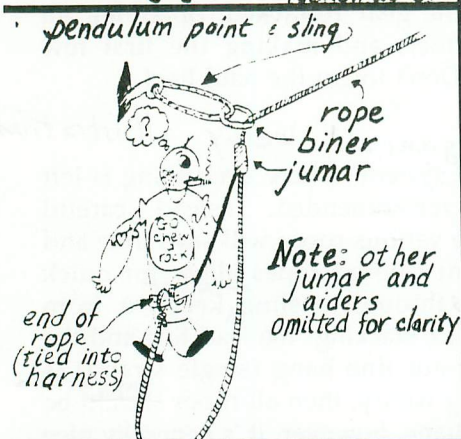
Other placements: As one develops an eye for a placement, the best selection can be made from the arsenal of possibilities. Two-cammed Friends are often secure. Brass nuts are frequently bomber in the bottom of pin scars. Bongs can be used sideways for large cracks. Placement possibilities are often endless for a given section of rock; good judgement will be helpful in choosing the most secure, most efficient placement. Finally, overdriving pitons past the point where they're obviously bomber makes them very hard to remove and is usually unnecessary (it's that "one last hit" which transforms a pin from "bomber" to "fixed"). Also, avoid placements such as directly below a small roof where the pin will be uncleanable (resulting in a "geometrically fixed pin").

Cleaning

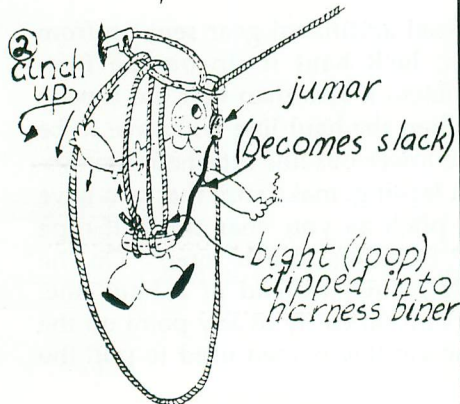
Efficiency while cleaning is a must. Keeping removed gear organized while cleaning a pitch makes re-racking for the next pitch simple. For cleaning purposes, I usually sacrifice a biner (large Bonatti D's last the longest) which I tape onto a cleaning sling. Clipping the cleaning biner into a to-be-cleaned piton prevents the piton from being dropped, and allows some leverage to be applied. Also, having a "Long Dong" (long Lost Arrow) accessible on a long sling speeds the cleaning of stuck nuts.

Cleaning pendulums: the simplest, quickest way to clean short pendulums (long ones must be rappelled) is to make a bight (loop) with the end that one's tied in with, pass it through the pendulum point sling, clip the bight into a biner in the harness, pull the slack

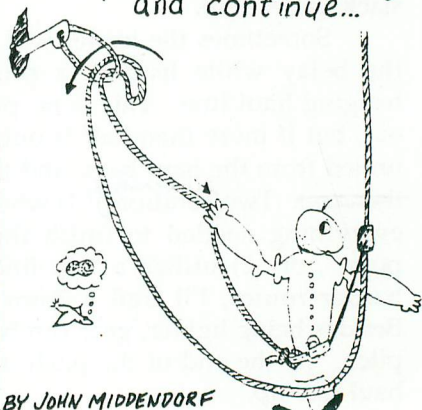
Cleaning pendulums (schematic)



① Pass bight through sling & clip into harness



⑤ unclip bight from harness pull through sling, and continue...



BY JOHN MIDDENDORF

out of the bight so the weight is on the bight and off the jumars, unclip the pendulum point biner, and lower out (only one hand necessary). The rope will pull through the pendulum point sling after lowering (unclip bight from harness and pull through).

If it is desired to keep the pendulum point piece (otherwise it must be left fixed), the sporty method involves hanging from the cleaning biner (clipped from harness to pendulum point), and hammering away at the pendulum point piece until it pulls--a sudden swing ensues.

Transitions

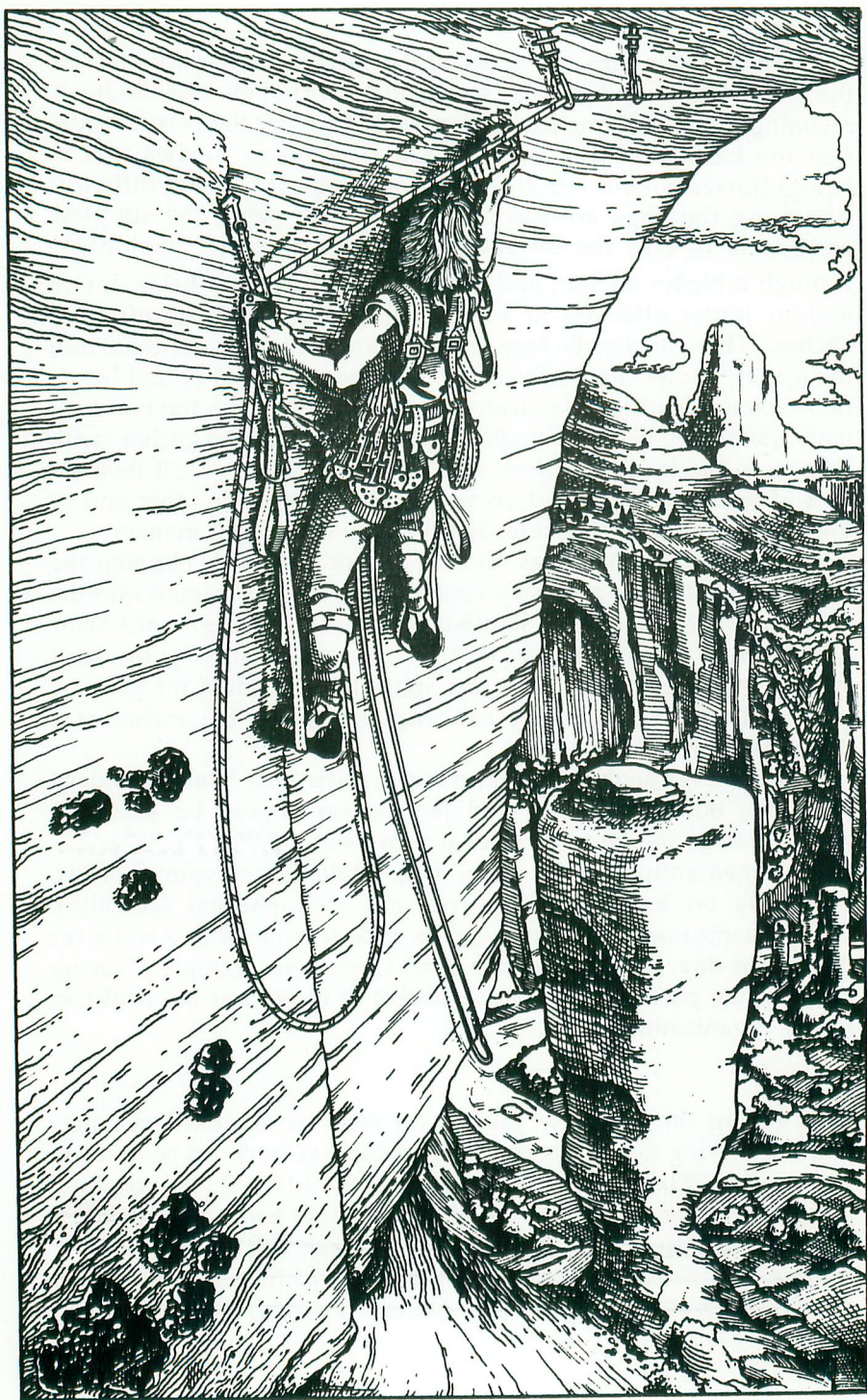
Making the transition from cleaning a pitch to leading the next pitch can be one of the more awkward times on the wall, especially when the belay is cramped. A well set up belay, with anchors spread out as much as possible, makes transitions simpler. Efficiency is key while getting the gear re-racked, obtaining an untangled belay from your partner, and making the first few placements off the belay anchor. Don't forget the haul line!

Ropes and Management

organized belay illustration

The "spaghetti management system" where everything is left to hang and tangle at will is not recommended. Instead, careful organization and separation of the various ropes will save time and energy in the long run. Different colored ropes allow for quick identification. Stacking ^{the} ropes through a sling ^{or binder} keeps it from blowing around and getting tangled; stacking the lead line and the haul line, and letting the lower-out line hang (single strand) is usually acceptable unless it's really windy, then all ropes ^{may need to} be stacked. If the haul line is left to hang, however, it's generally nice to clip it loosely to the belay with a Münter hitch so that the leader doesn't have to deal with the full weight of the haul rope (give slack as needed).

Sometimes the leader will need additional gear sent up from the belay while leading a pitch; he'll haul it up on the free-hanging haul line. This is no problem if less than half the rope is out, but if more than half is out, then the haul line will have to be untied from the haul bags, and the lower-out line attached (~~pain in the arse~~). Two ^{alternatives} solutions: 1) when leading, make sure that you have everything needed to finish the pitch as you near the half-rope point, or 2) utilize a "zip line" (requires fourth rope). On the harder routes, I'll trail a 7mm "zip line" instead of a haul line. Besides being lighter, gear can be sent up easily at any point on the pitch. At the end of the pitch, the zip line is then used to pull the haul line up.



Hauling

Re-write [Hauling the bags can be one of the more strenuous activities on the wall. Once the leader is set-up to haul (pulley, upside-down retaining jumar, hauling jumar clipped to harness) the belayer must free the bags from his anchor. On straight-up pitches this is straightforward, but on traversing pitches, it's often difficult. Assuming the bags are too heavy to lift by hand, the simplest method is to clip the lower-out line (tied into the haul bags) through a higher anchor, and mini-haul them (with a belay device and/or jumar attached to waist) until their weight is off their anchor. Then, unclip the bags from the anchor and lower them out; the leader/hauler then takes over. For huge 200-plus pound loads, two separate hauls can be made; simpler, however, is the two-man haul system: the cleaner somehow gets the bags off the anchor (with help from the leader/hauler), then cleans the pitch. He'll then act as a "dead weight" clipped on with his jumars to the other end of the haul line while the leader hauls in the traditional manner.

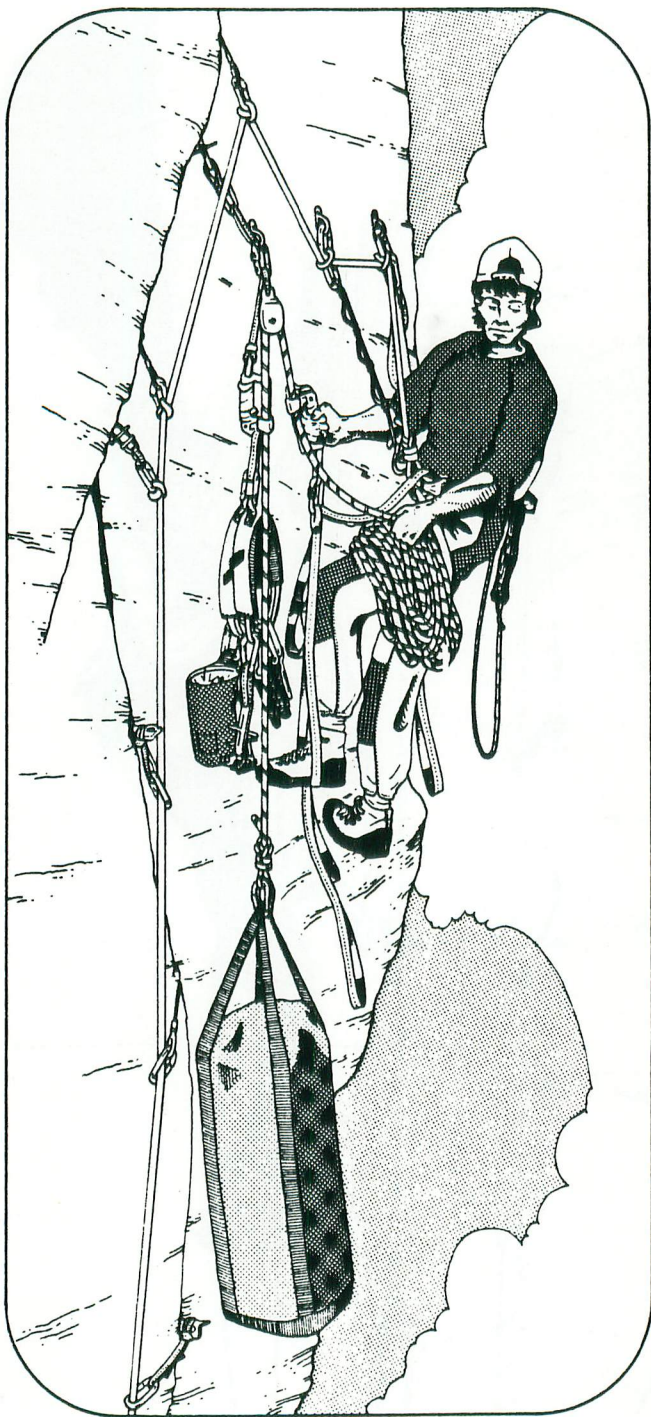
Clipping the haulbags into the anchor entails (1) clipping the haulbag daisy (a sling directly connected to the haulbag(s)) into the anchor, (2) lowering the haulbags (reverse hauling) until their weight is no longer on the haul line, (3) disassembling the haul system so that the pulley can be removed and readied for the next lead, and (4) clipping in the haul rope short into the anchor as a direct back-up to the daisy.

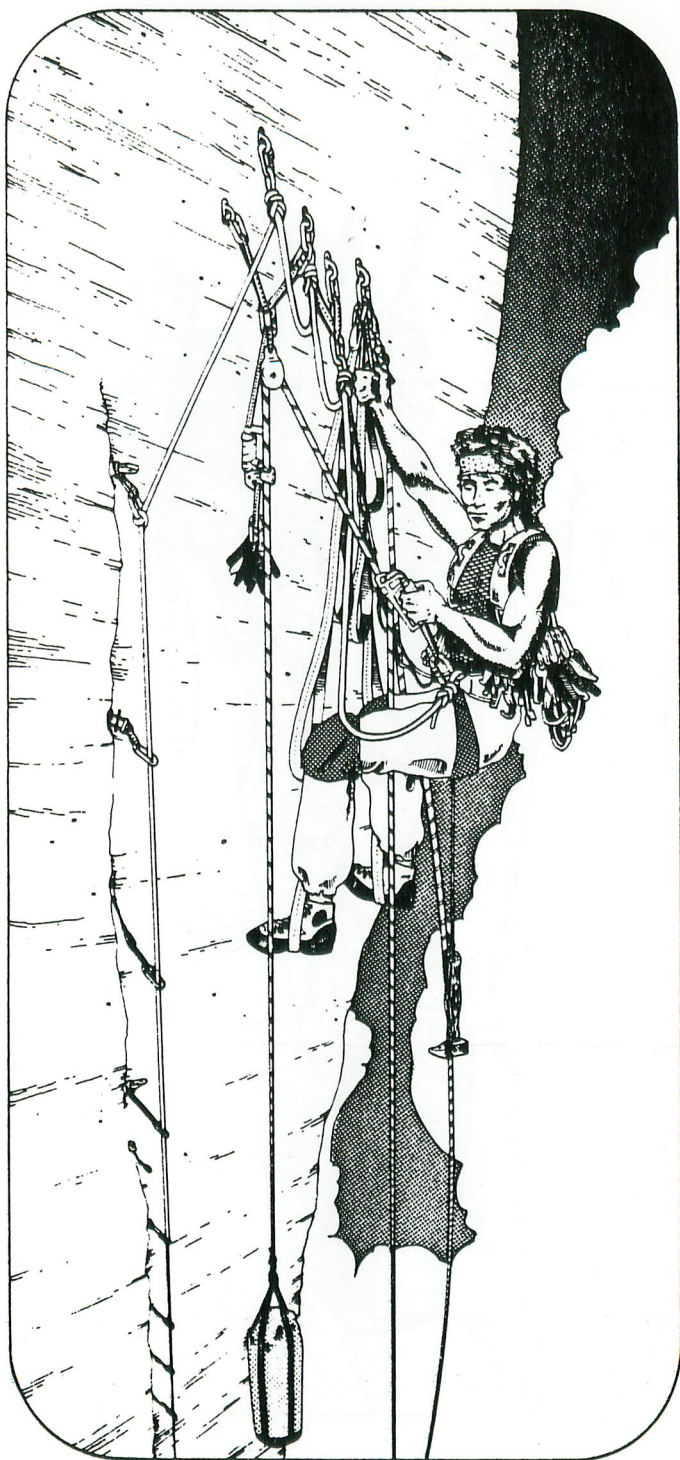
Haul bags getting caught on things during the haul is standard on walls; both the hauler and the cleaner should be aware of possible snags and be ready to deal with them. *lower-out line can be used from below.*

Organization of the haul bag: Make sure water bottles, especially on lower angle routes, are well padded (ensolite). Certain items need to be handy (extra rack, some food and water for during the day, possibly the rain gear) so pack accordingly. Having either a day-pack accessible or a pocket in the top of the haul bag makes organization simpler.

Fixing

Fixing the first few pitches on walls is standard practice; without making the full commitment, the initial work can be done on the wall. Fixing station-to-station is advised if possible, otherwise, ropes can be tied together and left to hang. ~~Leaving gear on the wall lessens the eventual work load, but watch for gear thieves (the lowest form of life).~~ Actually, this hasn't been too bad a problem in recent years, since getting caught could (should) be fatal.





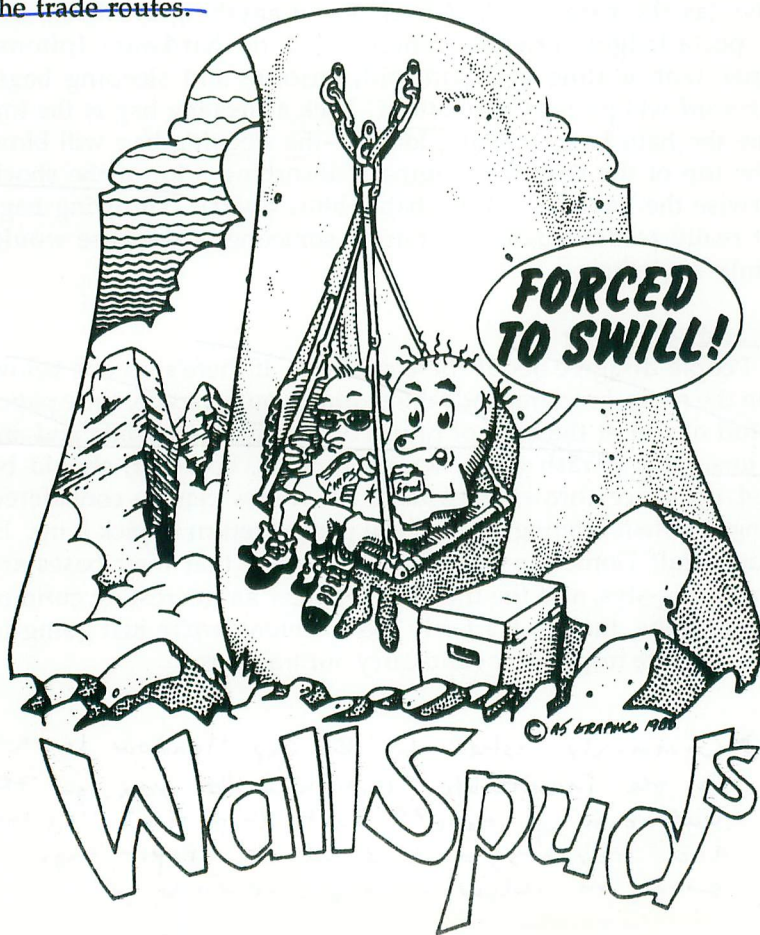
Hauling past knots is tricky, usually requiring either hauling temporarily through a carabiner, or lowering the hauling anchor. Rappelling past knots requires use of the jumars. *(Toto's method)*

Jumaring: always be tied into the jumars (daisys) while jumaring. Free-hanging jumaring can be made less strenuous with the "Texas style" system: clip the top jumar into a daisy and through a chest harness (which can be rigged in the field with slings) and have both feet in two separate aiders on the bottom jumar.

Bunji Cord Systems—also for free hanging & hauling

Bivys

Bivouacs are often the most pleasant time on walls. Stuff sacks (food) and sleeping bags with sewn tie loops can simplify bivy set-up. ~~Be sure to have practiced setting up your porta-ledge before you're actually on the wall, it's more difficult to set up while hanging on the route. Occasionally, if a bivy is too cramped, I'll set a bivy rivet to spread things out a little more (the only time I'll ever drill on an existing route); it is rarely necessary, however, on the trade routes.~~



Retreating

Retreating is difficult on the steeper routes, usually requiring down-nailing. It's always a good idea to keep in mind a general plan for emergencies. Weather is a major cause of trouble on walls; proper storm gear, even in the warmer seasons will often prevent a sudden change in plans due to a sudden change of weather. Self-rescue is the preferred escape; calling for a rescue should be avoided unless absolutely necessary-- keep in mind that a rescue is never a simple task.

Bag Throwing *Throwing bags off walls in Yosemite is illegal.*

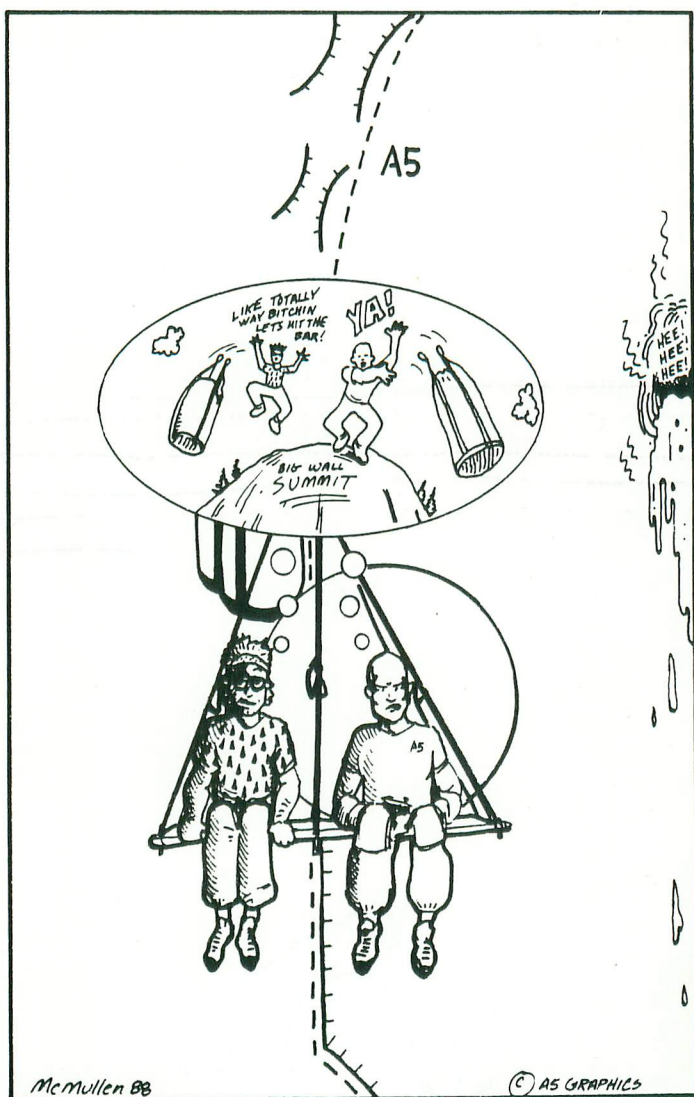
The NPS recently has semi-illegalized bag-throwing; if caught throwing haul bags off the top of a wall, you'll be charged with "creating a hazardous situation". Thus, don't do it unless you've a real need. If you do decide to throw bags, you can either throw a bag with only soft stuff (sleeping bags, clothes, slings, etc.), or throw heavy stuff rigged with a parachute-- parachutes can be fashioned out of aiders (as parachute cords) and porta-ledge rainflys (as the parachute). Never throw anything breakable (no cans, porta-ledges, Friends, biners), and tie hardware (pitons) together with a sling and pad with ensolite and sleeping bags. Heavy stuff will go near the bottom. Pack a sleeping bag at the top and tie the haul bag's opening loosely--the sleeping bag will blow out the top of the haulbag at impact, absorbing a lot of the shock (otherwise the haulbag will probably blow apart). Throwing bags is not really recommended, as hitting someone at the base would certainly be lethal.

*Empty
also
bottles
absorb
impact*

Shit and Garbage

People disagree about these subjects. If there's no one below you on the route, I recommend taking dumps out in space, since paper bags full of shit at the base of routes definitely last a while and are very unsightly. Trash (cans, wrappers, etc.), however, should be carried up, since throwing garbage off routes can be considered nothing less than littering, even if you plan to return to pick it up. El Cap and Half Dome are getting so much use that their bases are becoming pig-stys, and the trash is no longer an interesting curio of an ascent; thus, though it's fairly inconvenient, we're just going to have to be more responsible, and carry our trash up.

→ *Commonly asked by El Cap Meadow tourists is the inevitable "But how do you go to the bathroom up there?" Just drop those leg-loops and trousers, and send it! Paper bags are good on ledgy/low angle sections, but...*



"It ain't over 'til it's over" Yogi Berra



Fifi Hook

Part III: Miscellaneous Topics

Attitude

Big-wall climbing in Yosemite is a sport in itself--an adventure requiring specialized gear, specialized techniques, and above all, a specialized state of mind. In fact, the state of mind required for a multi-day big-wall ascent is so unique that many are unable to "click into it", and thus the initial failure rate by far exceeds the initial success rate. Commonly, a climber's natural impulse, once on the wall, is to immediately want to go down (intimidation, sudden lack of motivation); if the mind succumbs to this impulse, it then rationalizes reasons for not being there. Consequently, many parties retreat without any specific reason to (but with stacks of general ones: i.e. weather looked poor, not enough H₂O, etc.). Generally, if its possible to push through the first day or two of indecision, the rest is easy. ✓

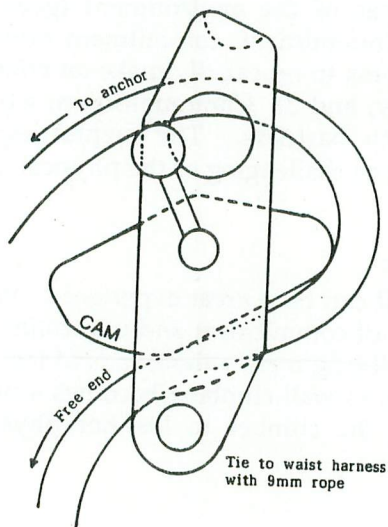
A determined and positive attitude is required for a successful big-wall ascent; dispassionate or negative attitudes guarantee failure. Big-wall climbing seems to require three basic mental talents: 1) Concentration and awareness: the ability to "keep it together" for long periods of time, combined with forethought and a fine-tuned awareness of the environment (gear, rock, weather, partner, etc.); 2) Commitment: commitment towards achieving a goal, and a willingness to repeatedly make an effort, and deal with hardships positively; and 3) Communication: working effectively and efficiently with partners. The mental aspect of big-wall climbing can be just as challenging as the physical aspect.

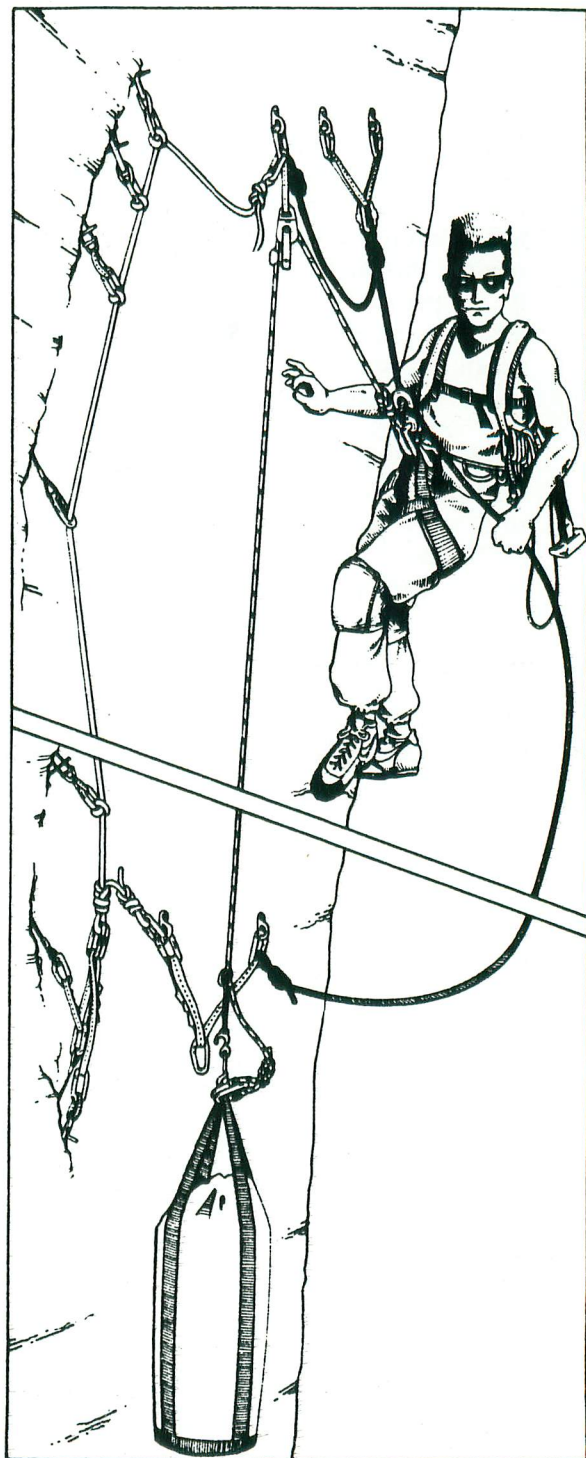
Solo Techniques

Soloing a wall can be a great experience. With a busy work load, a high degree of commitment and uncertainty, and an intense amount of solitude (~~being merely thousands of feet from civilization and yet so alone~~), solo wall climbing becomes a unique adventure, potentially testing the climber to his/her physical and mental limits.

Techniques are generally the same as with a partner, except that a self-contained belay system is required. For pure or mostly aid routes, the clove-hitch system works well. The climber simply ties a clove hitch in the lead line and clips it into a locking pearbinder on the harness. One end of the lead-line is anchored into the belay (must be good for upward pull), and the other end can be left to hang (or tied in and/or backed up--tied in short to the climber--depending on to what degree the system is trusted. [Letting the lead line hang single strand, however, prevents a loop from getting hung up on flakes.] Slack must be passed through the clove hitch as each move is made. Having two pearbiners allows large amounts of slack to be had (for free-climbing) while still always being tied in: tie a second clove hitch in the second pearbinder with the required amount of slack, then untie the first clove hitch. Note: new mechanical devices now available greatly increase efficiency and ease of use with solo self-belay systems. Rock Exotica's new "Solo-aid" device is essentially a mechanical version of the clove hitch, yet is a lot easier to use than a clove hitch, and is just as strong and secure.

One advantage to soloing is that rope drag is never a problem (the rope remains fixed in relation to the pieces); in fact, the rope can be tied into bomber pieces anywhere on the pitch. Leading and following pendulums is more difficult on the solo, requiring the use of jumars and/or a rappel device. Of major importance is setting up the haul line properly before a pitch gets led so that it doesn't snag while leading.





Warning: This is way rad!
For advanced soloists only.
Requires extreme care in
setting up!!

Once a lead is finished, the pitch must be rappelled and cleaned, and the bag hauled. A standard system entails rapping down the haul line (setting up the haul system before rappelling--third jumar required), freeing the haul bag, cleaning the pitch, hauling, and setting up to lead the next pitch. Getting back to the previous belay can be difficult if the pitch traverses considerably; infrequently two ropes must be tied together (must be set up before leading the pitch). One rope is then rappelled and the next jumared to the previous belay; the latter rope is then pulled back into the belay and used to lower out the haul bag. Generally, however, it is possible to simply rappel down on one rope and pull oneself (possibly with the jumars) back into the previous belay.

For straight-up pitches, the rappel/body haul system (the "sporty" system) can be used: two ropes are trailed in addition to the lead line: the haul line and a rappel line. The haul bag is left solely on a fifi hook (must be rigged properly so that an upward pull on the haul line will lift it off the anchor); the haul bag is then body-hauled as the pitch is rappelled (set up haul system carefully so that no snags develop). Though huge amounts of energy are saved, this system can be dangerous unless everything is set up exactly right; of major importance is to leave the haul bag on a remote part of the anchor so that a fall while leading would not disrupt the haul bag's anchor, possibly causing it to fall (disaster).



"BAD BOLT JU-JU"

First Ascents

During an ascent of the Pacific Ocean Wall, my partner Werner Braun commented on how the P.O. was the first wall to "cross the line into the absurd." The "line," apparently being somewhere between the climbing of a long, obvious, soaring crack system, and the climbing of a nebulous series of connected flakes and cracks. But with all the inspiring obvious lines on El Cap now conquered and immortalized by the first ascensionists with names like ~~The Heart Route, Magic Mushroom, Mescalito, Dihedral, Salathé, and Aquarian Wall~~, one can no longer sit in El Cap Meadow, spot the new, unclimbed line with the naked eye. Instead, binoculars and telescopes (such as the Celestron C-90) have become standard equipment, and the definition of a climbable line becomes redefined. The desire to pioneer new routes has continued, only with a finer sense of what can and cannot be done (this includes a sense of what is a reasonable number of drilled holes). Man's desire to climb where no man has climbed before (pardon the cliché) does not diminish with the fewer unclimbed obvious lines; rather, it remains as great as ever, only the gear, techniques, and attitudes change.

First ascents generally require extensive planning prior to the ascent itself. Prior planning includes making a topo of the area to be climbed drawn from a telescope mapping out potential features and alternative features, and determining the gear to be taken up. Generally, lots of extra gear needs to be included to account for the unknown climbing which will be encountered. The "unknown", the prerequisite to adventure, is in abundant supply on first ascents.

Ethics

Wall ethics do exist, though generally not as universally controversial as free-climbing ethics. Climbing is a game with certain non-absolute rules; though a lot of climbers pretend to ignore their existence and refuse to acknowledge specific rules, everyone seems to draw the line somewhere. With walls, good ethics come from having a reverent respect for the rock. Minimum impact becomes the name of the game. For first ascents, this involves minimum bolting and riveting (never drilling unless absolutely no natural placement is available), and minimum rock sculpting (poor style in any case). For subsequent ascents, basically any altering of the rock (besides the non-avoidable crack damage of placing and removing pins) is considered poor style. This includes drilling on lead (if you're drilling bolts where others didn't need them, you're probably out of your league), chiselling the rock for better placements, etc. But enough said about this grey subject... ✓

chiselling

Wall Climbing Styles

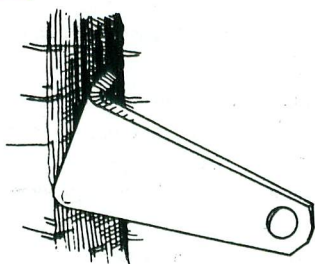
Wall climbing has a tradition of pioneers who have utilized the best of their present technologies, developed new specialized tools, and brought into existence novel and strange techniques in order to ascend previously unreasonable expanses of rock. When the ascetic hardmen Salathé and Nelson first climbed the Lost Arrow Chimney over a period of five days in 1947, they made a radical departure from the traditional rock climbing style then prevalent in Yosemite by introducing the Grade VI. By the late 50's, the sheer faces of Half Dome and El Cap were still considered impossible, but the Robbin's/Harding era changed all that (and also initiated the idea of "style" and its resulting controversies). Then by the late 60's and early 70's, wall climbing in Yosemite reached a peak with inspired individuals like Bridwell, Porter, Bard, Burton and Sutton predominating, each one pioneering in some manner, and developing new methods and styles.

Presently, wall climbing seems to have found some equilibrium, with the present game being to find those last great routes, and to climb them in as perfect style as possible (minimum bolting and rock sculpting). Most of the activity is still concentrated on the two "big stones" (El Cap & Half Dome), yet certain individuals like Steve Bosque, Mike Corbett, and Ken Yager have been active in finding good wall routes off the beaten path. Other present-day games include speed climbing (both of clean routes like the Nose, and nailing routes like the Shield), all-clean climbing of previously nailed routes, and no-bolt first ascents (such as Bob-the-aid-man's "Time Machine" near Glacier Point).

The future will probably bring new variations and refinements on these present day games, with new technology (synthetic pitons, new micro-gear) being influential.

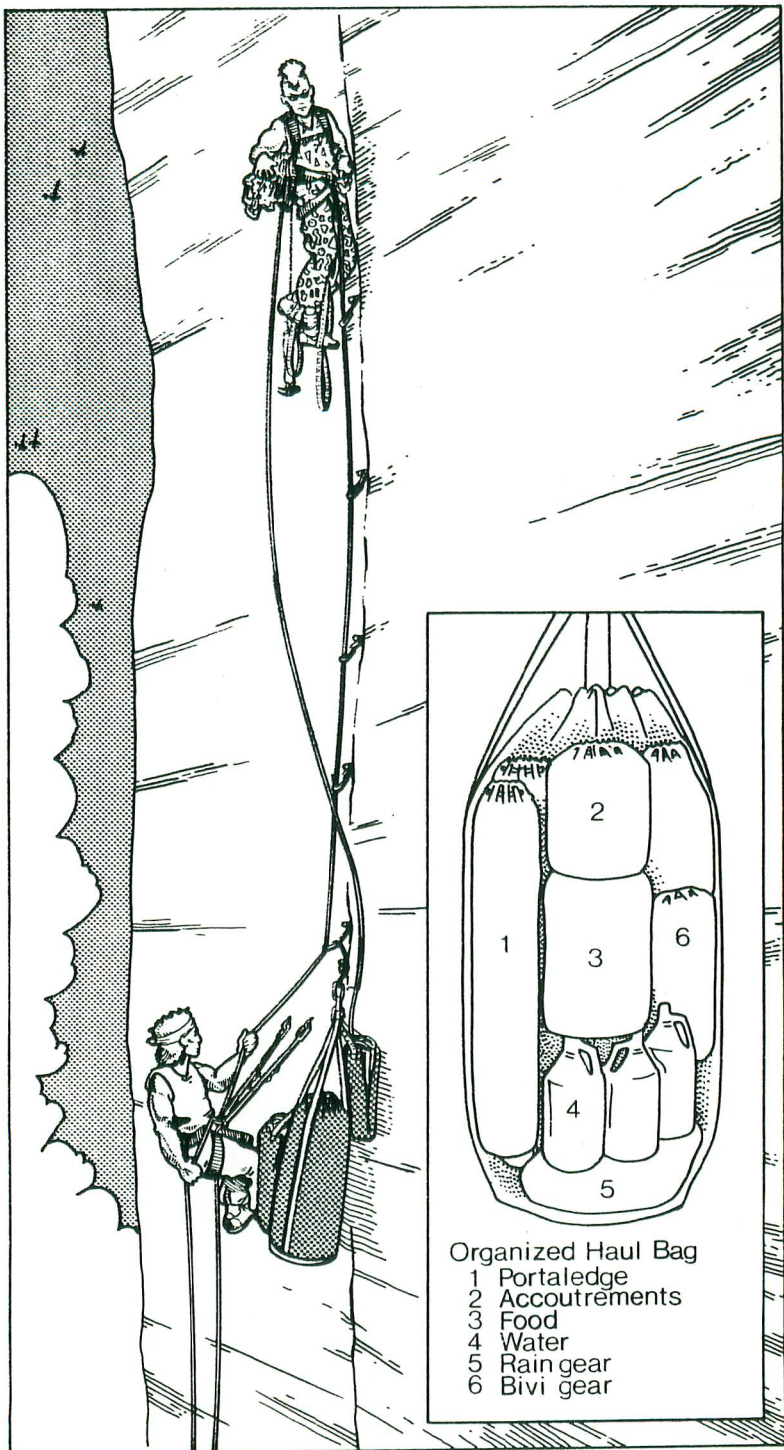
Better History

Cole/Grossman
Greg Child
Leavitt
Shipley



Native Son - last
great natural
line on El Cap.

Leeper Lie-back



Organized Haul Bag

- 1 Portaledge
- 2 Accoutrements
- 3 Food
- 4 Water
- 5 Rain gear
- 6 Bivi gear

Appendices

Appendix 1: Getting Started

Big walls are gear intensive, but its possible to get started on the big stones with a moderate amount of additional gear acquisition, dependent on the amount of improvisation and borrowing that is done. Two climbers each with a standard free-climbing rack and decent camping/bivy gear collectively have about 2/3 of the total gear needed for a moderate nail-up, i.e. Mescalito, Zodiac, or the Shield. The following is a basic checklist of the gear required.

Basic Big-wall Gear Checklist

Hardware (SFG stands for standard free-climbing gear)

2-3 Sets of Friends (SFG)

2-3 sets of wired stoppers (SFG)

2-3 sets of small brass-nuts (SFG)

80 carabiners (SFG)

Hook selection (2 to 5 of the standard types)

Copperhead selection (10-25)

Pitons (5-10 knifeblades, 10-20 horizontals, 15-25 angles)

Small bolt kit (optional)

Personal Wall Gear (per climber)

Harness*

Aiders*

Jumars

Hammer & holster

Headlamp

Rain gear

Wall-boots*

Kneepads and fingerless gloves

Wall spoon and Swiss army knife

Sleeping bag and ensolite

Other Stuff

Haul-bag*

Portaledge*

Double gear sling*

Ropes (2-3)

Tie-offs and runners

Pulley

Stuff sacks for gear/food organization

Water Bottles

Accoutrements, inc. speedy stitcher and duct-tape

Food

The items on the checklist marked with an asterisk are subject to improvisation; a portaledge, for example, can be anything from a plywood sheet rigged with cord or a suspended K-mart lawn chair to the deluxe, manufactured porta-ledges now available. The harness can vary from a simple 2" swami and 1" leg-loops to a custom made padded wall-harness. Aiders can be knotted from 1" web, or sewn. For wall-boots, a sturdy pair of tennis shoes (Lava-domes) is adequate (bring free-climbing shoes, too.) A duct-taped duffel bag may suffice as a haul-bag, or regular back-packs can be used to haul gear (a good, well-manufactured haul-bag made from abrasion-proof materials, however, is worth the investment). Two gear slings can be sewn together (with a speedy stitcher) for an adequate double gear sling.

Learning to aid climb

~~My first aid ever was nailing up a big tree with 6" nails so that I could set up a rappelling/prussiking station off a branch 30' off the ground.~~ Practicing aid on free-climbing cracks with Friends, nuts, and aiders is good beginning, as would be cleaning such pitches with ascenders. Personalized instruction is helpful, and so is learning with a friend of similar experience (concentrate on safety). Climbing practice aid routes, playing on boulders with hooks, and placing, testing, hanging on gear and making subsequent placements will familiarize one with the basics. If used to free-climbing, the slowness of aid may be a bit unnervy at first.

To prepare for a big-wall, start with the basics on smaller crags, and master them: making placements, moving with aid ladders efficiently, setting up belays, jumaring, cleaning gear effectively, organizing the rack. Then move onto the next step: learning to haul, packing and conveniently organizing the haul bag, deciding upon and organizing the gear needed for a route (proper planning), preserving flesh (shredded hands after a climb are proof of inefficient thrashing), and getting in shape and becoming tough for future harder adventures. Experience and proficiency only come from doing (and not from reading a manual such as this).

Appendix 2: Yosemite Walls

By no means is the following a complete list; it is merely a selection of well-known walls broken down by category. Of course, fine big-wall adventures can be had off the beaten path--discover them for yourself. The hard routes listed here really are hard; attempting these without the proper experience is not only dangerous, but invariably means that bolts will be added. Moderate routes require a fair amount of experience, and the all-clean and trade routes merely require tenacity and good judgement (those with a high degree of mechanical aptitude generally do well from the start). For more information on gear and on getting started on walls, contact A5 Adventures, *the* big-wall supply shop, at 1109 S. Plaza Way #286, Flagstaff, AZ 86001 Phone: (602) 779-5084.

Getting started--short practice aid routes:

Direct South Face, Rixon's Pinnacle
The Stigma
Bishop's Terrace (roof)
The Folly, Left Side

All Clean, or nearly all clean routes:

South Face, Washington's Column
The Prow
Leaning Tower
Lost Arrow Spire, Direct
Half Dome, Regular Route
The Nose
Salathé

Hard Nailing Routes:

Iron Hawk (medium-hard)
Zenyatta Mendatta (medium hard)
Turning Point
Jolly Rodger
Sea of Dreams
Sheep Ranch
Space
Atlantic Ocean Wall
Born Under a Bad Sign
Native Son
The Big Chill (Half Dome)
many others...

Current Trade Routes:

Lurking Fear
The Shield
Mescalito
Tangerine Trip
Zodiac

Moderate Nailing Routes:

Never-Never-Land
Cosmos
Magic Mushroom
North American Wall
Pacific Ocean Wall
Tis-sa-ack
Liberty Cap, SW Face (Werner's Woot)
South Face of Half Dome



Adventures

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bigwalls.net

```
/*-----
```

Programming by John Middendorf. I wrote this program to learn interface methods and to build some basic programs that can possibly be posted and used as useful programs in the future. I have written programs to create cam shapes previously in Basic and Pascal.

```
-----*/
```

```
/* Version 1.0: 4/96 First program in C*/
```

```
#include <Printing.h>
#include <Types.h>
#include <Memory.h>
#include <Quickdraw.h>
#include <Fonts.h>
#include <Events.h>
#include <Menus.h>
#include <Windows.h>
#include <TextEdit.h>
#include <Dialogs.h>
#include <OSUtils.h>
#include <ToolUtils.h>
#include <SegLoad.h>
#include <fp.h>
/*#include <math.h>*/
//#include <stdlib.h>
#include <strings.h>
#include <SANE.h>
```

```
int width;
int height;
```

```
windRect = qd.screenBits.bounds;
InsetRect(&windRect, 50, 50);
width = windRect.right - windRect.left;
height = windRect.bottom - windRect.top;
mainPtr = GetNewWindow( 128, 0L, (WindowPtr)-1L);
/*SizeWindow( mainPtr, width, height, true);*/
ShowWindow( mainPtr);
SetPort(mainPtr);
}
/*-----
```

```
void EventLoop( void )
{
    while ( gDone == false )
    {
        WaitNextEvent( everyEvent, &TheEvent, 15L, nil );
        switch ( TheEvent.what )
        {
            case keyDown:
                MoveTo ( 10,10 );
                DrawString( "pA key has been pressed" );
                count = 0; while (count < 100000) count++;
                break;
            case mouseDown:
                HandleMouseDown( TheEvent );
                break;
```

```
/* Constants */
```

```
#define test 311
```

```
/* Globals */
```

```
long gAngle;
long gAngleMinutes;
```

```
long gSize;
```

```
EventRecord TheEvent;
```

```
WindowPtr mainPtr;
WindowPtr TheWindow;
WindowPtr aWindow;
```

```
DialogPtr theDialog;
DialogPtr dlogSplash;
```

```
long count;
int CamDone = 0;
```

```
Boolean gDone = false;
```

```
/* Prototypes */
```

```
case updateEvt:
HandleUpdate( TheEvent );
break;
}
}
}
/*-----*/
void HandleUpdate( EventRecord TheEvent )
{
    WindowPtr theWindow;
    RgnHandle theOrigClipRgn;
    Rect theClipMinusScrollRect;
    theWindow = (WindowPtr)TheEvent.message;
    BeginUpdate( theWindow );
    SetPort( theWindow );
    theOrigClipRgn = NewRgn();
    GetClip( theOrigClipRgn );
    EraseRect( &theWindow->portRect );
    DrawGrowIcon( theWindow );
```

```
theClipMinusScrollRect = theWindow->portRect;
theClipMinusScrollRect.right -= 16;
theClipMinusScrollRect.bottom -=16;
ClipRect( &theClipMinusScrollRect );
if ( CamDone == 1 ) Cam(gAngle.gAngleMinutes.gSize);
SetClip( theOrigClipRgn );
DisposeRgn( theOrigClipRgn );
EndUpdate( theWindow );
}
```

```
void Initialize(void);
void SetUpMenuBar( void );
void HandleMenuChoice( long );
void HandleMouseDown( EventRecord);
void SetUpWindow( void);
void EventLoop( void);
void Cam(long gAngle.Jong gAngleMinutes.Jong gSize);
void HandleUpdate( EventRecord );
void RunDialog(void);
void InputError(void);
void printCam( void );
void SplashScreen(void);
```

```
/*-----*/
```

```
/*Main body of program */
```

```
void main(void)
{
    Initialize();
    SetUpMenuBar();
    SetUpWindow();
    SplashScreen();
    EventLoop();
}
```

```
/*-----*/
```

```
void SetUpWindow () //must check for presence of window (may have been closed)<now closebox quits>
/*Set a maximum size window:*/
{
    Rect windRect;
```

```
/*-----*/
```

```
void HandleMouseDown (EventRecord TheEvent)/*uses aWindow (not sure why this is diff)*/
{
    short ThePart;
    long theMenuChoice;
    Rect theGrowLimitsRect;
    long theNewSize;
    short theNewWidth;
    short theNewHeight;
```

```
ThePart = FindWindow (TheEvent.where, &aWindow );
switch (ThePart)
{
    case inMenuBar:
        theMenuChoice = MenuSelect (TheEvent.where );
        if (theMenuChoice > 0)
            HandleMenuChoice(theMenuChoice);
        break;
    case inGrow:
        SetRect( &theGrowLimitsRect, 50, 50, 1000, 1000 );
        theNewSize = GrowWindow( aWindow, TheEvent.where, &theGrowLimitsRect );
        if ( theNewSize != 0 )
        {
            theNewWidth = LoWord( theNewSize );
            theNewHeight = HiWord( theNewSize );
            SetPort( aWindow );
            EraseRect( &aWindow->portRect );
```

```

SizeWindow( aWindow, theNewWidth, theNewHeight, true );
InvalRect( &aWindow->portRect );
}
break;
case inDrag:
DragWindow( aWindow, TheEvent.where, &qd.screenBits.bounds );
break;
case inGoAway:
DisposeWindow( aWindow);
gDone=true;
break;
}
}
/*.....*/

void HandleMenuChoice( long theMenuChoice)
{
short TheMenu;
short TheMenuItem;

MenuItemHandle theAppleMenu;
Str255 theItemName;
short theItemNumber;

TheMenu = HiWord( theMenuChoice);
TheMenuItem = LoWord( theMenuChoice);
switch ( TheMenu)
{
case 128: switch (TheMenuItem)

DialogPtr spDialog; /*can't say I know how this serendipity method works.*/

}
/*.....*/

void RunDialog(void)
{
DialogPtr theDialog;
short theItem;
short theType;
Boolean doneWithDialog = false;
long maxrange = 30;

Rect dlogRect;
Handle dlogHandle;

Str255 intAngle = "p14";
Str255 intAngleMinutes ="p30";
Str255 intSize ="p3";

theDialog = GetNewDialog( 128, nil, (WindowPtr)-1L);
if ( theDialog == nil )
ExitToShell();
GetDialogItem( theDialog, 3, &theType, &dlogHandle, &dlogRect);
SetDialogItemText( dlogHandle, intAngle );
GetDialogItem( theDialog, 9, &theType, &dlogHandle, &dlogRect);
SetDialogItemText( dlogHandle, intAngleMimtes );
GetDialogItem( theDialog, 4, &theType, &dlogHandle, &dlogRect);

```

```

{
case 1: SplashScreen();
break;
default:
theAppleMenu = GetMenuHandle( 128);
GetMenuItemText( theAppleMenu, TheMenuItem, theItemName);
theItemNumber = OpenDeskAcc( theItemName);
break;
}
break;
case 129: switch (TheMenuItem)
{
case 1: printCam();
break;
case 2: gDone = true; break;
}
break;
case 131:
switch (TheMenuItem)
{
case 1: RunDialog();
CamDone = 1;
break;
case 2: SplashScreen();
break;
}
break;
}
}
HiLiteMenu( 0);

SetDialogItemText( dlogHandle, intSize);
ShowWindow( theDialog);
SetPort(theDialog);

while (doneWithDialog == false)
{
ModalDialog( nil, &theItem );
switch ( theItem )
{
case 1: /*this is the ok button*/
GetDialogItem( theDialog, 3, &theType, &dlogHandle, &dlogRect);
GetDialogItemText( dlogHandle , intAngle );
StringToNum( intAngle.&gAngle);
if (gAngle > maxrange)
InputError();
GetDialogItem( theDialog, 9, &theType, &dlogHandle, &dlogRect);
GetDialogItemText( dlogHandle , intAngleMinutes );
StringToNum( intAngleMinutes, &gAngleMinutes);
if (gAngleMinutes>59)
InputError();
/* big problem here with Str255 to double conversion.*/
/* This is an attempt to convert to a frigging number
temp2 == P2CStr( temp);
str2dec(temp2, &index, &ddec, &validPrefix);
gAngle = (double_t) dec2num(&ddec);
*/
GetDialogItem( theDialog, 4, &theType, &dlogHandle, &dlogRect);
GetDialogItemText( dlogHandle , intSize );
StringToNum( intSize.&gSize);

```

```

}
/*.....*/

void SetUpMenuBar( void )
{
Handle theMenuBar;
MenuItemHandle theAppleMenu;
theMenuBar = GetNewMBar( 128 );
SetMenuBar( theMenuBar );
DisposeHandle( theMenuBar );
theAppleMenu = GetMenuHandle( 128 );
AppendResMenu( theAppleMenu, 'DRVr' );

DrawMenuBar();
}
/*.....*/

void SplashScreen(void)
{
DialogPtr spDialog;
short theItem;

spDialog = GetNewDialog( 129, nil, (WindowPtr)-1L);
if ( spDialog == nil )
ExitToShell();

ModalDialog( nil, &theItem );

if (theItem == 1)
SysBeep( 10);

if (gSize>5)
InputError();
doneWithDialog = true;
DisposeDialog( theDialog);
SetPort(mainPtr);
EraseRect( &mainPtr ->portRect);
DrawGrowIcon(mainPtr);
Cam(gAngle.gAngleMinutes.gSize);
break;

}
}
/*.....*/

void InputError(void)
{
DialogPtr theDialog;
short theItem;
short theType;
Boolean doneWithDialog = false;

Rect dlogRect;
Handle dlogHandle;

theDialog = GetNewDialog( 130, nil, (WindowPtr)-1L);
if ( theDialog == nil )
ExitToShell();
ShowWindow( theDialog);

```



```
SetPort(theDialog);
```

```
while (doneWithDialog == false)
```

```
{
```

```
    ModalDialog( nil, &theItem );
```

```
    switch ( theItem )
```

```
    {
```

```
        case 2:/*this is the ok button*/
```

```
            DisposeDialog( theDialog);
```

```
            doneWithDialog = true;
```

```
            RunDialog();
```

```
            break;
```

```
        }
```

```
    }
```

```
}
```

```
/*-----*/
```

```
void Cam(long gAngleJong gAngleMinutes, long gSize)
```

```
{
```

```
    float camangle;
```

```
    float r;
```

```
    float theta;
```

```
    float max;
```

```
    float y;
```

```
    float x;
```

```
    float a;
```

```
    int count;
```

```
    int ox = 180;
```

```
    int oy = 256;
```

```
userClickedOK = PrStdDialog( thePrintRecord );
```

```
/*userClickedOK = PrJobDialog( thePrintRecord );*/
```

```
if ( userClickedOK == true )
```

```
{
```

```
    thePrinterPort = PrOpenDoc( thePrintRecord, nil, nil );
```

```
    PrOpenPage( thePrinterPort, nil );
```

```
    Cam ( gAngle.gAngleMinutes.gSize);
```

```
    PrClosePage( thePrinterPort );
```

```
    PrCloseDoc( thePrinterPort );
```

```
}
```

```
PrClose();
```

```
}
```

```
/*-----*/
```

```
/*Initialize all the needed managers.*/
```

```
void Initialize(void)
```

```
{
```

```
    InitGraf(&qd.thePort);
```

```
    InitFonts();
```

```
    InitWindows();
```

```
    InitMenus();
```

```
    TEInit();
```

```
    InitDialogs(nil);
```

```
    FlushEvents( everyEvent.0);
```

```
    InitCursor();
```

```
}
```

```
/*-----*/
```

```
Str255 teststr = "pBloody Hell!";
```

```
Rect smallRect;
```

```
long frac;
```

```
Str255 TheFraction;
```

```
frac = (long)(10 * gAngleMinutes)/60;
```

```
NumToString( frac,TheFraction);
```

```
camangle = gAngle + (frac/10);
```

```
max = (gSize*72);
```

```
MoveTo (15,15);
```

```
NumToString(gAngle.teststr);
```

```
DrawString ( "\p Cam Angle equals ");DrawString( teststr); DrawString ( "\p. "; DrawString (TheFraction);
```

```
DrawString ( "\p degrees. ");
```

```
MoveTo(ox,oy);
```

```
SetRect (&smallRect, ox-5.oy-5.ox+5.oy+5);
```

```
PenPat (&qd.black);
```

```
PaintOval (&smallRect);
```

```
PenSize(1,1);
```

```
a = sin (camangle * (3.14159/180));
```

```
count = -540;
```

```
/*Don't forget icons.*/
```

```
while (count < 345)
```

```
{
```

```
    theta = count;
```

```
    theta = theta * (3.14159/180);
```

```
    r = max * (exp(a * theta))/(exp(a * 3.14159));
```

```
    x = (ox - (r * cos(theta)));
```

```
    y = (oy - (r * sin(theta)));
```

```
    ShowPen();
```

```
    LineTo (x,y);
```

```
    //DrawString (x);
```

```
    count++;}
```

```
    //LineTo (ox,oy);
```

```
}
```

```
/*-----*/
```

```
/*NEEDS ABILITY TO SAVE and Multiple Windows.*/
```

```
void printCam( void )
```

```
{
```

```
    TPPrPort thePrinterPort;
```

```
    THPrint thePrintRecord;
```

```
    Boolean userClickedOK;
```

```
thePrintRecord = (THPrint)NewHandleClear( sizeof( TPrint ) );
```

```
PrOpen();
```

```
PrintDefault( thePrintRecord );
```

Future Chock

by Mel Banks



I woke late to a throbbing headache. The Sierra sky was already bright through a haze of smoke and suspended dust, and I had to squint. I sat up and looked around groggily, rubbing little chunks of yellow crust out of the corners of my eyes. The Pits

was like a battlefield. Zonked bodies lay everywhere in the dirt, some in sleeping bags, others sprawled grotesquely where they'd passed out. Scattered wine bottles and beer cans dully reflected the embers of dying, dismally smoking bonfires. A ragged dog prowled listlessly, sniffing at backpacks and dirty pots, tail between its legs. Here and there a dusty, beat-up tent, symbol of affluence in the Pits, sagged from limp guylines. I staggered to my feet, brushed the sand off my clothes and shouldered my tattered rucksack.

The Yosemite Pits. One thing about the Valley, you could always count on a place to bag down. If, that is, you weren't too choosy about your neighbors. The Pits had been the Park Service's final answer to people pollution — a vast, bulldozed tract, lifeless and barren, with free and unlimited camping. Created under the NPS Revision Act of 1996, it had become the park's overflow dumping ground for all the punks and dopies from the cities, the outlaw bikers, the bums and winos. Not to mention the down and out climbers like myself, who, lacking tourist credentials, were not allowed in the other campgrounds. Not that I could have afforded it, anyway.

I plodded out across the flat expanse of the Pits toward a distant line of pines, kicking up dust as I wove my way around snoring bodies, toppled motorcycles, a shattered conga drum, a couple of empty half-kegs. The smell of vomit and urine was overpowering as the sun began to bake the odors out of the dry, sandy dirt. At the end of the season, I knew, big, yellow government dozers would come through, scrape the surface clean and then spread fresh fill dirt over it all. Good as new.

The dog that I'd seen prowling snarled at me as I passed and snapped weakly at my leg. I kicked it aside and walked on, the pine woods growing larger, looming ahead of me like a spiritual oasis. What the hell, I was getting out, going home. I'd had all I could take for a while.

Out at the loop road I hitched a ride with a tourist heading into the Lodge complex. Touries don't usually pick up the non-tour climbers, but this one had a "Climbers Do It In Slings" bumper sticker on his truck camper and sported a chrome plated bolt hanger for a key ring. He took me all the way to Inner Fringe Parking, activating

the automatic gatepost with his plastic Golden Tourcard. I got out and nodded thanks. The tourie stepped over into a shuttlebus line, Tourcard clutched in his hand. I started hiking the remaining half mile to the Lodge.

The Yosemite Lodge was a marvel that never failed to impress me. Approaching along the asphalt walkway from the parking lot, I could see several of the huge hotel turrets in the distance, rising above the treetops like outsized silos. The turrets were all capped by observation domes that glittered on their tops like giant soap bubbles. You could, it was said, sit in a restaurant under one of those airy bubbles at night, 200 feet off the deck, and nibble prime filet while gazing out at a spectacular 360 degree view of the moonlit Valley. Giddy catwalks connected the hotel turrets with each other and with other taller, more slender lookout spires, forming an intricate structure of great strength and beauty. The entire complex gleamed dully white in the brilliant California sun. It was Plastic Oz, the Magic Kingdom and the Pearly Gates.

I slunk through an entry arcade into the spacious courtyard in the center of the complex. Swarms of tourists with cameras dangling and screaming children in tow bustled everywhere. Lines of people in shiny, bright-colored outfits sprouted out of buildings into the courtyard, waiting patiently to be seated in restaurants or be admitted to the shops. A bevy of pre-teen girls, wearing green vinyl Junior Wilderness Scout uniforms, saw me enter and giggled.

Glancing around self-consciously, I spotted Yale Thermit in the cafeteria queue about 75th from the door, next to a huge potted fern. Yale and I'd had some good times back when we were both beginners, sharing a cookpot in the Pits and thrashing up the 5.10 training solos. But then Yale had made it, in a minor way at least, by kissing ass and doing tawdry little climbs for the amusement of certain wealthy socialites with odd tendencies. Not that I could really blame him. Here he was in the Lodge cafeteria line, Tourcard tucked snugly in the hip pocket of his fashionable, nylon taffeta climber's whites, while I was still groveling in the Pits. I walked over to him in the line, ignoring the politely disgusted glances from the people around him.

"Yale," I said.

"Hey, old buddy," he said coolly, extending a manicured hand. "What brings you here? still sleeping in the good old Pits, I see."

I glanced down at my disheveled clothes. "Yeah," I admitted. "the good old Pits. Well, you know how it is..." I shrugged. "Man, you should have been there last night, though. The Lost Arrows came in and threw a really wild one, must have been 40 bikes." I winked knowingly. "You remember what their chickies are like, eh?" I added, nudging him in the side with my elbow. Actually, I had washed down a couple of phenobarbs with some Koolaid and grain and zonked out. I hated the Pits and everyone in them. "But anyway," I continued, "I'm clearing out. Know any rides back to the Coast?"

Yale looked at me in amazement. "You're leaving?" he asked incredulously. "You can't be serious, not when everyone else is just getting here. Don't you even know who's here?"

Shamefully I wagged my head "no."

"Harold DeMegalo is who, that's all." He sounded almost pitying. "Man, for somebody who's supposedly trying to make it, you sure don't seem to know what's happening. I'm auditioning, myself."

DeMegalo. That was big news, indeed. Harold DeMegalo was the biggest producer of climbing adventure tapes in the country. His very first production, "Duel on the Rock," had sold over a million video cassettes and had made overnight stars of both featured soloists. Low on art, maybe, but high on bucks. Someone like DeMegalo could very well be my ticket out of the Pits, if I could only somehow get to him.

"You say you're auditioning?" I said to Yale. "How'd you swing that? Where's he staying?"

"He's staying right here at the Lodge, of course, *but forget it*, old Pits chum." He smiled smugly, and I hated him. "You'll just have to get out on the rock like everyone else and hope you get noticed."

I was about to press him for more, but a plastic-booted Cruddy Co. guard had spotted me and was bearing down fast. I bid goodbye to Yale, asked him to put in a good word for me with DeMegalo, and hurried over to a nearby public vending plaza. Non-tourists were allowed in the Lodge complex only if engaged in a legitimate business transaction.

I flopped my rucksack down, pulled a couple of crumpled twos from the flap pouch and ran them through the changer for a handful of aluminum Cruddycoins. The guard strode up to the edge of the plaza, folded a pair of thick arms across his brown naugahyde tunic and glared. I fed the tokens rapidly into an autofeeder and punched in my order. A preheated can of chili clunked out of the slot. I popped the lid off and began eating with the little white spoon that had dropped out with it. The guard sauntered up to me and peered in my face as I chewed. He did not look friendly.

"What do you think you're doing here, toad?" he snarled. His right hand went instinctively to the shiny black butt of the holstered pelpistol at his waist.

Fear tweaked at my guts. Although I knew that by federal ruling the concessionaire guards could use only non-lethal rubber pels in their automatic weapons, the Cruddy Co. had managed to get permission for a particularly painful type of rapidfire cartridge on account of the climbers, who were notoriously pain resistant. I did not care to give the guard an excuse to use it.

I smiled blandly. "Officer," I said politely, "I'm sure you'll find me to be in full compliance with NPS Reg 175, Section 3c as revised 1996, which allows that 'persons with non-tourist status shall have full use of all open-air facilities within concessionaire operated compounds, so long as said non-tourist persons...'"

"Yeah, yeah," the guard interrupted, "...and long as said non-tour scum is engaged in a legitimate activity and blah, blah, blah." He misquoted the reg but he had the general idea. I held up my chili can and spoon and rolled my eyes up at the open sky above the courtyard to emphasize my point. The Tourist-Cruddy Co. Establishment despised us non-tours, but that didn't stop them from greedily gobbling up our small bills.

"You wise-ass non-tourist punks make me sick!" the guard went on, working himself up. "Why don't you shave your chests and wear plastic clothes like everybody else?" He gestured to my filthy, patched cotton whites. "Those pants look like you barfed on them." I had, in fact, three days before. "Just finish that grot you're eating and clear out. Stinking Pits zombie."

I needed time to think. Somehow I had to get to DeMegalo. I ate slowly, chewing each mouthful of the synthetic orange slop for as long as I could hold it in my mouth without gagging. The guard's eyes followed my hand from can to mouth and back with a look of utter revulsion. He was losing patience.

A bold idea occurred to me. It was still early in the day. If DeMegalo was indeed staying at the Lodge, he was very likely there right that minute, perhaps in the New Seasons finishing up a leisurely breakfast with his entourage, or high above in one of the turret bubbles lingering over imported champagne and croissants. The central courtyard where I stood was visible from just about anywhere in the Lodge complex, so chances were that any commotion in the courtyard would come to DeMegalo's attention, wherever he was. And being human, he would look. No one, not even Harold DeMegalo, could resist a riot.

I glanced up at the imposing wall rising behind the autofeeder machine next to me. The vending plaza was tucked against the base of one of the great hotel turrets. The vast sweep of the turret's cylindrical flank soared smoothly 22 stories above the courtyard. This particular turret, I knew, was capped by the bubble dome of the swank Winnebago Room, one of the lushest and most exclusive eateries in the Valley.

Briefly I studied the turret's structure. It was like a towering stack of monster checkers, each checker representing one story. At the junction of each story a small lip, formed by the floor joint, ran around the circumference of the tower. A line of tall, narrow slit windows, probably delineating an emergency stairwell, ran straight up the turret through rows of normal sized picture windows. I would go, I decided, right up that line of slit windows. It was dead vertical and smooth, though, and it would be long, hard and chancy. I might slip out of one of those slit windows 200 feet up and tomato back to the pebbly concrete at the feet of the guard. On the other hand, if I made it to the top, DeMegalo might see me, offer me a contract, and I'd be fated to glory. In between...well, I'd never set foot in the Valley again, that much was certain.

I made up my mind. Looking directly at the guard, I said in a loud, arrogant voice, "You know, I'm get-

ting sick and tired of you standing there staring at me like that." His heavy features twitched with a mixture of puzzlement and alarm. "It doesn't help my digestion much to have an ape slobbering at me while I eat. Didn't they feed you yet?" I sneered. "Here, eat this." I up-ended the chili can and shook it. The contents splattered onto the pavement and over the guard's immaculate, buffed boots.

There was a stunned moment of shock as the guard stood slack-jawed taking this in. The thousand faces of the milling crowd turned toward us. I glimpsed Yale Thermit's smug face contorted in amazement and disbelief. He was probably mortified that he'd been seen talking to me. I felt that exhilarating rush of irrevocability that comes when you finally decide to go for it.

"Why, you lousy stinking chalkhead!" the guard screamed. He lunged for me with outstretched hands. I was ready. I whirled deftly, reached high and placed a hand on top of the bulky auto-feeder and executed a graceful one-armed mantle to a standing position on top. The guard groped wildly for my foot. I lunged off the top of the machine for the turret's nearest slit window, which was about 10 feet to the side and a little above my head. I caught the sill with one hand and swung crazily. For a horrible moment I thought I was going to lose it and drop back down to the enraged guard, but the slippery grip held. I wished I had my chalk bag.

The guard was unsnapping his chunky pelpistol from its holster, cursing steadily. I relaxed my mind, focused all my energies on the immediate climbing problem and started up. The guard had his gun out and was aiming it directly at my head. I mantled up into the narrow window slot, squirmed an arm and shoulder into it and locked myself in. The guard fired a long, full-auto burst. He was a good shot. I winced in agony as the barrage of pels slammed into my ear and cheek, knocking my head sideways. Blood trickled down my neck from painful welts. I thrutched frantically up the slot until I could reach the small lip running along the outside of the floor joint. Getting both hands on it, I pulled up hard, keeping a heeltoe in the window slot below, and lunged for the sill of the next window. I made it, completing the first of the repetitive cycle of moves that would take me to

the top. If, that is, my strength held.

The guard was now directly below me firing straight up. Burst after burst zipped up my legs and into my crotch, many of the pels burning directly up inside my pant legs. My lower body was seared with pain. I moved up another story. More guards were converging below, loping toward the base of the turret shouting and madly waving pelpistols. One was lugging a bulky automatic pelrifle on a tripod.

The crowd was in an uproar, just as I'd hoped. Horrified tourists ran back and forth below like stampeding rabbits, screaming and gawking up at me. I only hoped DeMegalo was seeing this.

I slipped into the strenuous rhythm of the climb, moving up floor by floor through the biting hail of pels. Reaching the eighth floor, I cleared the tops of the surrounding buildings and the Valley opened up around me. The majestic Upper Yosemite Falls came into view, the stark gray finger of the Lost Arrow to its right.

Between them was the huge, neon "CLIMB" sign, inviting the tourists to let themselves be led up the cliffs by smiling, nylon-clad Cruddy Co.

guides. It blinked dully pink against the gray wall, urging me upward.

By the 19th floor I began to have serious misgivings. My arms ached, my head pounded and my hands were greased. My pants, shredded by continual pel blasts, flapped loosely around my bloody, lacerated legs. Red smears marked the trail of my ascent up the clean white surface of the tower. My legs began to shake, and visions of myself plunging helplessly downward into the frenzied pack of guards floated through my fatigued brain.

Suddenly an awed murmur arose from the crowd and the pel guns went strangely silent. The crowd, I saw, was staring not at me but at a point beyond, higher up the turret. I looked up. A figure had appeared on one of the catwalks connected to the top of my turret. It was the figure of a large man, imposing and resplendent in fashionable red Gortex Lederhosen and tanned, hairless chest. A seductive girl in tight halter and ski-tight slacks clung to his shoulder, one hand toying suggestively with his suspender.

DeMegalo! I would recognize him anywhere. His picture had certainly appeared in *Rock Tripe* often enough. Harold DeMegalo leaned over the rail-

ing of the catwalk and surveyed the scene below him with cool, regal amusement. The girl gaped down wide-eyed, her bosoms hanging over the rail like two grapefruits in a belay seat. I hung there for a micro-eternity staring up at them. Finally DeMegalo's eyes met mine and he broke into wolfish grin. 'Damn good show, kid,' he said. "I liked it. I admire guts. Now get your ass up here and join me in the Winnebago Room."

With that he turned from the railing and swept into the turret, the girl trailing behind clinging to a suspender. I was left stunned. I could scarcely believe what had happened, even though it had been my plan all along. Tears welled out and mixed with the sweat that was already stinging my eyes.

I recovered from my shock and started moving up again. Fresh, bright energy surged through me, making the moves seem effortless as I swarmed smoothly up the remaining floors to the top. DeMegalo had noticed me, and I was on my way. Goodbye Pits. Hello Winnebago Room. By God, I'd made it!

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SUPER GUIDE





Big Wall Forum

Big Wall Climbing Forum--brought to you by the deuce!

News:

A first ascent is an artistic creation, the only moment when our imagination can work with original stone. It could only be done right once. --Jim Bridwell

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Author

Topic: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest (Read 19258 times)

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PRINT

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deuce4

The Deuce
Administrator
A3+ Copper Bender



Posts: 182



Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« on: June 05, 2006, 04:08:18 pm »

Free original A5 big wall hammer (lightly used) to the first person to post two Google Earth images (one from 5 miles up, showing the wall itself, and one from a 500 mile altitude showing the region with the wall location marked), which pinpoint the location of the unclimbed big wall pictured below.

Limit three entries per person. No clues on this one, save for the wall is over 2000 feet and the fact that I took the photograph.

Good Luck!

Logged

Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

mungeclimber

Administrator
A4+ Dreamer



Posts: 2257

Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #1 on: June 05, 2006, 05:39:15 pm »

I'm disqualifying myself just on the off chance that i get it right and then have an appearance of impropriety.

we can't have that without at least a few beers, and I'm still at work (tho you'd think i have with my spelling errors- edited).

oh, and there is also another excellent earth viewing site out there too...

<http://local.live.com/>

Logged

the_dude

A3+ Copper Bender

Posts: 213



Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #2 on: June 07, 2006, 03:05:46 pm »

Stumped.. Any other hints for us?

Logged

syrinx

A3 Fool

Posts: 136



Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #3 on: June 07, 2006, 03:09:21 pm »

Which direction does the face face? What time of day is it? What is the altitude at the top?

Syrinx

Logged

Never approach a bull from the front, a horse from the rear, or a fool from any direction!

Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #4 on: June 28, 2006, 08:13:02 am »

Hey guys better get crackin' on this one. I am about to devote too much time that I don't have to get me that hammer.

I have been trying to get one for quite a while and I am striking out big time.

So we'll see.

peace

Logged

deuce4

The Deuce
Administrator
A3+ Copper Bender



Posts: 182



CLUES!

« Reply #5 on: July 03, 2006, 10:33:07 am »

It looks like this contest is too difficult, so here's some more clues--additional pictures of the region:



Another shot of the wall showing local vegetation and architecture.



Another unclimbed wall in the same valley.

Logged

Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

Pete

Gumby

Posts: 12



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

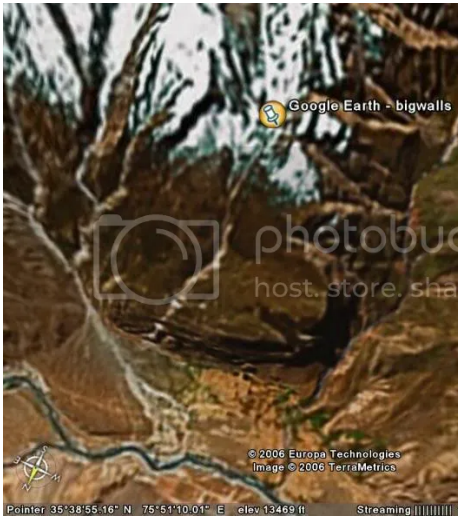
« Reply #6 on: December 14, 2006, 03:51:45 am »

I know this is dredging up teh old topic, but I PM'd John and he said that along with the hammer there was beta on teh wall available, which sounds even better

So this is my try:



Locals crossing a bridge from the nearby village (you can see the wall from the village).



Pete

Logged

deuce4
The Deuce
Administrator
A3+ Copper Bender

Posts: 182

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest
« **Reply #7 on:** December 14, 2006, 09:25:15 am »

Pete, great try. Lukewarm. Correct continent.
cheers

Logged

Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

Strider
A1 fiend

Posts: 34

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest
« **Reply #8 on:** December 15, 2006, 12:39:43 am »

Alright, here is my stab in the dark...well maybe not a stab in the "dark" since I spent the last 6 hours looking around on googleearth and doing reserach trying to

figure this out. But i am pretty sure i am not right so I am hoping for a few clues after this try...hint...hint....

-n

Logged

deuce4
The Deuce
Administrator
A3+ Copper Bender

Posts: 182

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest
« **Reply #9 on:** December 15, 2006, 10:32:37 am »

You're getting warmer!
But no cigar...yet!

Logged

Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

Rags
A3+ Copper Bender

Posts: 177

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest
« **Reply #10 on:** December 15, 2006, 10:44:45 am »

I searched for this yesterday. The "your getting warm" hint tells me I may have been very close. However, I do not have Goofball Earth, and don't want to load it on my computer. John will you accept an entry from Goofball Maps?

Did you know that India contains 20% of the worlds granite? I didn't till yesterday.
Gives you an idea of the search I've been on :<)

Logged

Be Safe, Live Long, Climb Hard!
Rick

deuce4
The Deuce
Administrator
A3+ Copper Bender

Posts: 182

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest
« **Reply #11 on:** December 15, 2006, 11:38:05 am »

interesting.

The trouble with Google Maps is it doesn't have the lat/long coordinates, which I will need to verify the location. But if you can figure a way to give me those, a Google Map might be ok.

Logged

Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

Pete

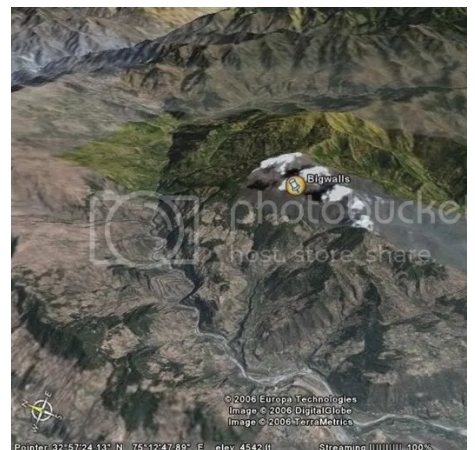
Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

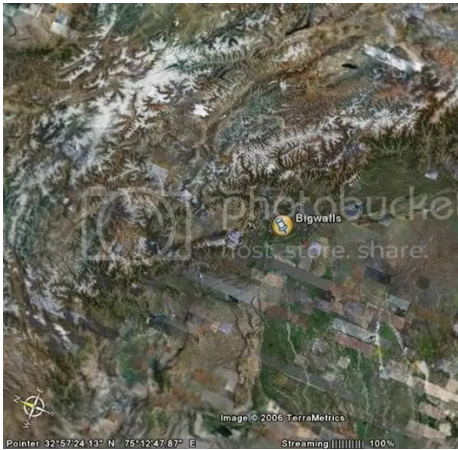
Gumby

Posts: 12

« **Reply #12 on:** December 15, 2006, 03:39:03 pm »

If at first you don't succeed...





Fingers crossed!

Logged

deuce4
The Deuce
Administrator
A3+ Copper Bender
[5 red squares]
[Avatar]
Posts: 182

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest
« **Reply #13 on:** December 16, 2006, 01:28:15 pm »

nope. Good try, looks like an interesting area.

You were within 5 degrees of both latitude and longitude.

cheers

Logged

Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

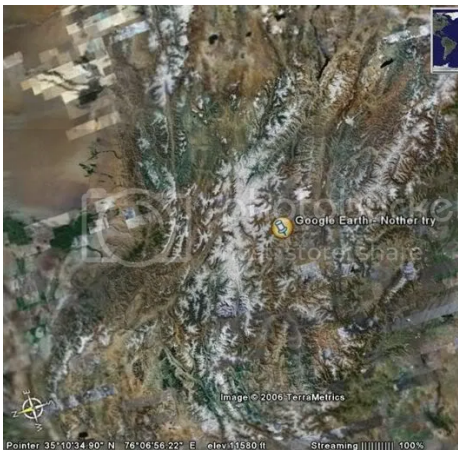
mungeclimber
Administrator
A4+ Dreamer
[5 red squares]
[Avatar]
Posts: 2257

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest
« **Reply #14 on:** December 17, 2006, 09:47:17 pm »

Well, i was going to guess Tien Shans, but I guess not. doh

Logged

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest



I wish I was planning a trip there right now instead of poor and wet! Damn Britain!

Pete

Logged

deuce4
The Deuce
Administrator
A3+ Copper Bender
[5 red squares]
[Avatar]
Posts: 182

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest
« **Reply #16 on:** December 19, 2006, 06:45:01 pm »

getting colder....

Logged

Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

Rags
A3+ Copper Bender
[5 yellow squares]
[Avatar]
Posts: 177

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest
« **Reply #17 on:** December 20, 2006, 12:00:21 am »

Oh my..... spent a lot of time with this. The google earth is pretty fun, now that I loaded it.

Great geography lesson, However. I should post an image of the 5000ft monster I found.

Gumby
[2 yellow squares]
Posts: 12
[Avatar]

« **Reply #15 on:** December 19, 2006, 12:28:34 pm »

Another effort! This is really tricky!



deuce4
The Deuce
Administrator
A3+ Copper Bender
[5 red squares]
[Avatar]
Posts: 182

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest
« **Reply #18 on:** December 20, 2006, 03:36:54 pm »

no, but it looks nice.

Logged

Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

zippyslug
A2 Flyer
[3 yellow squares]
Posts: 57
[Avatar]

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest
« **Reply #19 on:** April 10, 2007, 03:51:59 pm »

Hey, is it too late to play? The thread is damn near a year old but I never saw it solved so I'd like to take a crack.

over-all area:

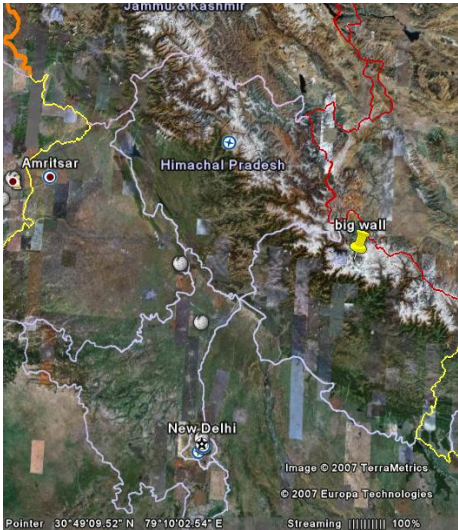
Anyway, here is my best shot, based on all the little clues I could derive from your pics and previous posts.

Actually, I don't believe this is correct.
It's the pic of the river that throws me off. It appears to run somewhat oriented toward North.
I assume it's the same valley. So....

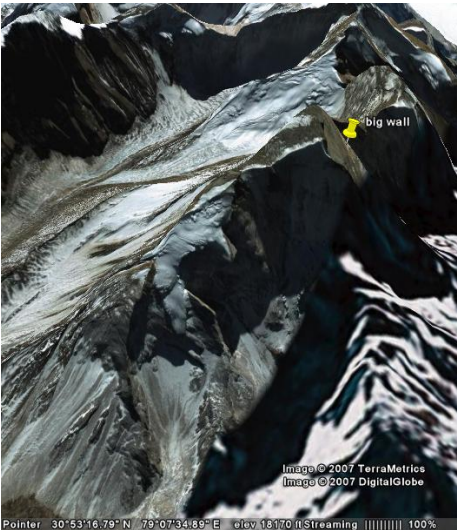
Logged

Be Safe, Live Long, Climb Hard!

Rick



close-up view of the wall:



How close am I 🤔

☐ caribouman

A3 Fool

Posts: 136



Logged

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #20 on: April 13, 2007, 06:22:50 am »

John,

I just figured out a very large piece of this puzzle, but I'm not inclined to put all the necessary pieces together (upgrading RAM etc.) to put my own entry in here. So, my question: May I put out a generalized hint or two?

Logged

when the going gets weird, the weird turn pro.

☒ deuce4

The Deuce

Administrator

A3+ Copper Bender



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #21 on: May 04, 2007, 01:17:20 pm »

Zippyslug- Close, but no cigar. It is to the East of where you spotted.



Posts: 182



Caribouman-By all means, hint away. The hammer I have is just itching to be used again on the big stones!

Logged

Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

☐ splitthard

Gumby

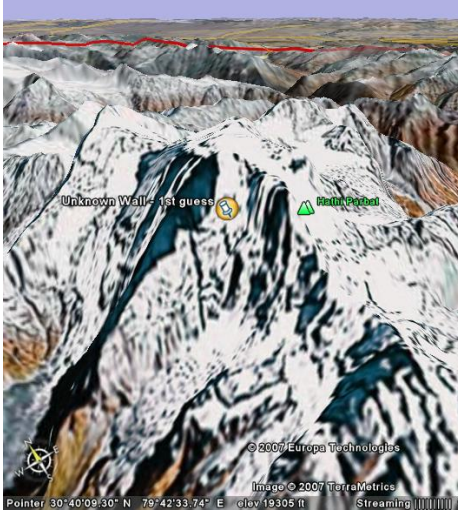
Posts: 19



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #22 on: May 09, 2007, 07:10:18 am »

I thought I'd join in on this thing. I've been having a grand time looking around this region, first time really using Google Earth. It's a great tool!



Close? Any hints??

Logged

☐ zippyslug

A2 Flyer

Posts: 57



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #23 on: May 09, 2007, 09:19:33 am »

" first time really using Google Earth. It's a great tool! "

Meant to say something to this effect, too. I had never heard of it until this thread but now use it a fair amount. Now only if they could give a 3D look to my neighborhood.... 🤔

Logged

☒ deuce4

The Deuce

Administrator

A3+ Copper Bender



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #24 on: May 09, 2007, 10:16:34 am »

splitthard- Nope, not the right region. I've never been in that area, but it looks like it would be spectacular! I did once hike around Mt. Kailas in Tibet, but it's not around there either.

Logged

Posts: 182



Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

☐ **caribouman**

A3 Fool



Posts: 136



☒ **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**
« **Reply #25 on:** May 18, 2007, 03:45:10 pm »

out on a bit of limb here...

- the wall is in the Karakoram, the western part of the Himalaya, no?
- Look at the photo... that face is either West, South or East, and it's sunny (given Deuce's responses to other attempts, it's in the Northern Hemisphere)
- Look at how close that wall appears to be, and the angle to which the camera is tilted... low angle. Thus I'd say we're looking at a minor peak, not 7 or 8 thousand meters. Maybe 6, 6 and a half.
- Look at the tree line. The tree line altitude is different in different places, probably pretty high at that latitude, but not below the 9,600 of the Sierra Nevada. That might give a rough clue to the overall peak height.
- Also, I might go out on a bit more of a limb and say that the photo was taken mid day... something about the foreground shadows maybe. So that would narrow the face direction to South.
- Big stretch. The rock itself, the overall shapes and color look either Karakoram or Patagonia, and given other responses, t'aint Patagonia.

So Deuce, any of those ideas correct?



when the going gets weird, the weird turn pro.

☒ **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**
« **Reply #26 on:** May 18, 2007, 05:51:03 pm »

well reasoned it seems.

whatever happened to the new hammer thread on the Taco?



☒ **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**
« **Reply #27 on:** May 20, 2007, 11:09:24 am »

Pretty good, Caribouman. All good, but not in the Karakoram....



Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

☒ **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**
« **Reply #28 on:** June 22, 2007, 07:45:13 am »

☐ **mungeclimber**

Administrator

A4+ Dreamer



Posts: 2257



☒ **deuce4**

The Deuce

Administrator

A3+ Copper Bender

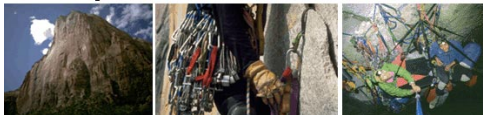


Posts: 182



☐ **ice ravines**

A2 Flyer



Big Wall Forum

Big Wall Climbing Forum--brought to you by the deuce!

News:

"So remember, boys and girls, double clip that sleeping bag in when you are on an Old E salvage mission!" -Deuce4

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Author

Topic: [Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest](#) (Read 19259 times)

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☒ **deuce4**

The Deuce

Administrator

A3+ Copper Bender



Posts: 182



☒ **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**
« **Reply #30 on:** July 27, 2007, 04:10:28 pm »

Ice Ravines was very close, but not the right spot. Looks like it would be worth investigating, though.



Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

☒ **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**
« **Reply #31 on:** May 21, 2009, 03:41:40 pm »

Is this contest officially over? Or merely dormant? Never found out where the mystery wall was!



☒ **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**
« **Reply #32 on:** May 21, 2009, 04:46:18 pm »

Everyone's holding out for a virgin deuce5 hammer...

A new carrot...you gotta have some 'Beaks laying around, John. Cough em up.



Posts: 50



☐ **Baltoro**

A3+ Copper Bender



Posts: 154



Looks like the Spiti Valley - Manali area , Himachal Pradesh . I will try to load up the earth with your requirements

[.http://www.bigwalls.com/forum2/gallery/core/action.php?action=personal&file=Spiti_valley_-_Manali_area.jpg](http://www.bigwalls.com/forum2/gallery/core/action.php?action=personal&file=Spiti_valley_-_Manali_area.jpg)

http://www.bigwalls.com/forum2/gallery/core/action.php?action=personal&file=Area_of_big_wall.jpg

« **Last Edit:** June 27, 2007, 08:03:29 am by ice ravines »



☒ **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**

« **Reply #29 on:** July 25, 2007, 09:20:16 pm »

Was there ever any feedback on IceRavines answer? That one looks pretty promising.

~R



Sometimes I succeed. Sometimes I fail. Sometimes I am too lazy to do either.
M. Twilight

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Say no to limbers, excavators and retro-bolters. No matter how much he smiles.

skully

Guest

☒ **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**

« **Reply #33 on:** May 21, 2009, 08:30:47 pm »

It seems the thing was left unsolved. How 'bout it, Deuce4?
Are we still on for virtual wall shoppin'? (Dumb question, huh?)
Where'd your hammer end up?

« **Last Edit:** May 22, 2009, 04:13:52 pm by skully »



☒ **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**

« **Reply #34 on:** May 22, 2009, 01:43:28 am »

I'm just waiting... is it on, is it off, did anyone win? are you throwing in beaks to sweeten the pot?
Been googling until my eyes are crossed.



☐ **KevinW**

A3+ Copper Bender



Posts: 174



☐ **KevinW**

A3+ Copper Bender



Posts: 174



skully

Guest

☒ **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**

« **Reply #36 on:** May 22, 2009, 07:08:23 pm »

We may never know.....Apparently, Deucey has lost interest.



☒ **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**

« **Reply #37 on:** May 22, 2009, 10:30:58 pm »

Damn, I'm always a day late and a dollar short for the good deals !



☐ **deuce4**

The Deuce

Administrator

☒ **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**

« **Reply #38 on:** May 23, 2009, 06:10:07 am »

A3+ Copper Bender



Posts: 182



☐ KevinW

A3+ Copper Bender



Posts: 174



skully

Guest

☐ Raaf

A2 Flyer



Posts: 60



☐ KevinW

A3+ Copper Bender



Posts: 174



skully

Guest

»

The contest is still on, though it may be some delays in checking the answers.

one mint A5 hammer up for grabs for just picking a point on the map....



Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #39 on:** May 23, 2009, 08:38:36 am

»

WooHoo !!!

Thanks deuce count me in

(now to go back through the thread and check answers against my saved GoogleEarth searches)



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #40 on:** May 24, 2009, 08:04:12 am

»

I must be a doofus....I can't figure out how to transfer Google Earth images onto this board.

Dammit! Got a good guess, too. Arrrrgh.



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #41 on:** May 24, 2009, 10:09:29 am

»

Hmmmm.....gotta do some searchin' soon. Cool!



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #42 on:** May 24, 2009, 12:37:19 pm

»

Figure it out yet skully ? They're just screen captures, that have been uploaded to photobucket *(or where ever)* and then posted here.



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #43 on:** May 24, 2009, 02:10:24 pm

»

You better post up your findings Skully before I find it!

Zac



I do this for fun...

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #49 on:** May 26, 2009, 07:05:07 am

»

I think I have the right valley, but everytime I fly up one of the side valleys, I find something that "could" be it as well, then starts the comparison game.. still narrowing it down,... 1/2 million Google Earth Miles later.



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #50 on:** May 30, 2009, 02:09:28 pm

»

I've got a guess posted, waiting for Deucey to shoot it down before tryin' again. I think it looks like a good guess.



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #51 on:** May 30, 2009, 09:54:09 pm

»

I want to jump in to the mix too.

I like what Skully has right now.



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #52 on:** May 31, 2009, 08:25:20 pm

»

Well, Podner, don't let that stop ya.....



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #53 on:** June 02, 2009, 02:20:22 pm

»

Quote from: MagicOPromotion on June 02, 2009, 11:22:31 am

How does your Pira compare to say your **barong** in terms of performance?

Ok, Here goes!

And Farther...

Cheers!

« *Last Edit: May 24, 2009, 02:22:03 pm by skully* »



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #44 on:** May 25, 2009, 07:33:46 am

»

Venture a guess, Kevin? This is pretty damn fun.....



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #45 on:** May 25, 2009, 08:29:56 am

»

Well.. I've probably spent 10 hours so far on *Google Earth*, and think I'm pretty damn close, but... with a limit of 3 guesses, I'm trying to narrow it down a little more, because not only have a found a lot of very interesting unnamed peaks that appear to have little or no history, but.. I really do want that hammer!!!



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #46 on:** May 25, 2009, 03:18:55 pm

»

Just downloaded google earth... I'll be searching through out the week while I'm off work.

Zac



I do this for fun...

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #47 on:** May 25, 2009, 05:23:52 pm

»

Dammit! More contestants! I think my first guess is pretty good, but just in case, I have another..... That hammer is MINE! Hahahahal (wanted to give a bit of incentive....)



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #48 on:** May 25, 2009, 11:38:15 pm

»

I think I've put in 3 hours today so far and my eye's are killing me...

barong? Filipino wedding happening? I better go back and read the thread.



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #54 on:** June 06, 2009, 02:04:49 pm

»

A Barong..

- ... a rounded shaped bong.. aka pipe with holes drilled in it?
- .. the sound a bong makes while being pounded in?



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #55 on:** June 22, 2009, 11:02:27 pm

»

It's like he uses his own private language, loosely rooted in English. Right on, Barong! Still got a guess up, Deucey! I just keep bumpin' it up so you'll (maybe) notice. Groove on.



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #56 on:** June 23, 2009, 03:52:21 am

»

Skully--You're too far west!

ps when youse guys post here with a guess, let me know also by email.

Cheers!



Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #57 on:** June 25, 2009, 03:07:17 am

»

I've been checking this out and now that I have a bunch of down time at work I'm gonna give this a go. Let me know if I'm close cause I know I'm not spot on...yet.



Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer

contest

« **Reply #58 on:** July 06, 2009, 09:48:47 am

»

☐ KevinW

A3+ Copper Bender



Posts: 174



skully

Guest

☐ Zombi

Posts: 2



skully

Guest

☐ mungeclimber

Administrator

A4+ Dreamer



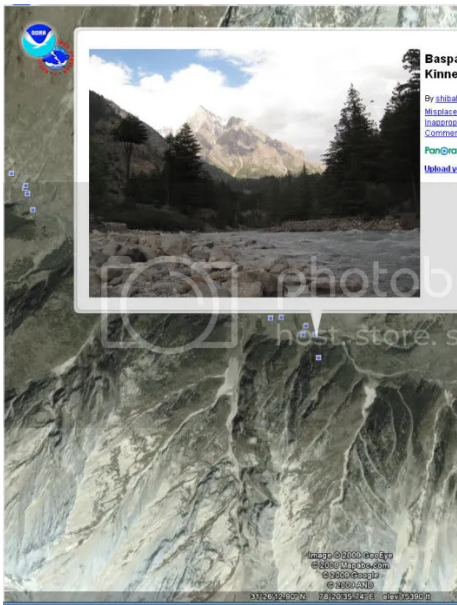
Posts: 2257



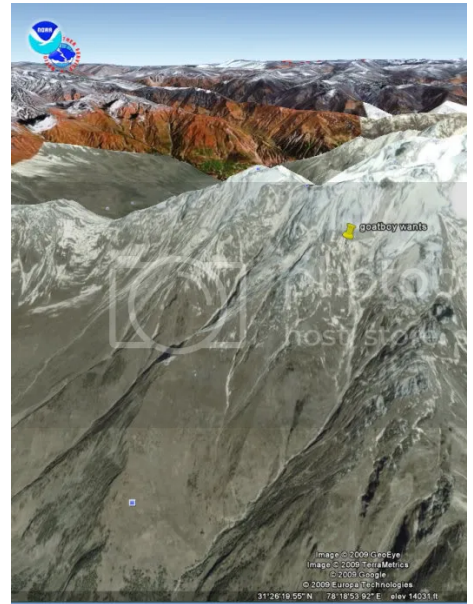


Okay I'll play?it's in the Sangla Valley by the Baspa River between Batseri village and Banjara camp.
Here's another view of the wall from the intertubez:
<http://www.indiamike.com/photopost/showphoto.php/photo/30092/size/big/ppuser/32>

The second peak looks like Kinner Kailash, this is what tipped me off to the area since I have seen this peak before online and squirreled it away as a place I'd like to visit whenever I get to India.



close up view



5 miles high



500 miles high



I'm a little high and hungover from this weekend when I figured all this out so in case I'm delusional and imagining all of this please forgive me.

coordinates 31degrees 26'39.27"N - 78 degrees 18'50.80"E

« Last Edit: July 06, 2009, 09:52:37 am by goatboy »

Logged

 **deuce4**

The Deuce
Administrator
A3+ Copper Bender



Posts: 182

 **Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**

« Reply #59 on: July 06, 2009, 10:35:30 am »

GOATBOY WINS!!!

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

I will be in sending you a hammer in August! Please send me your address to my email at deuce4 at bigwalls.net

mungeclimber

Administrator
A4+ Dreamer
Posts: 2257

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #60 on: July 06, 2009, 11:12:10 am »

WOOT!!!

goatboy

A1 fiend
Posts: 42

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #61 on: July 06, 2009, 01:11:37 pm »

Woot indeed!
Thanks John, I look forward to swinging that hammer on the sharp and high wild.

KevinW

A3+ Copper Bender
Posts: 174

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #62 on: July 07, 2009, 11:30:05 am »

CONGRATS goatboy!

I've had connection issues for a month now, so I haven't been able to play along, as much as I wanted to.
I was in the right area, wrong valley, but would have not guessed that peak from the GoogleEarth images
I looked at. The area just seemed way to flat looking, even when I was doing low altitude fly-bys up and down the valleys.

Thanks Deuce, it was a great contest!

(You wouldn't happen to have any more spare hardware laying around would you?)

goatboy

A1 fiend
Posts: 42

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #63 on: July 07, 2009, 11:58:47 am »

C'mon out to the Black and I'll let you use the hammer any time Kevin...I'm too big for anything over A3 anyhow, you like decomposing pegmatite right?

Caz

A4+ Dreamer
Posts: 520

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #64 on: July 07, 2009, 02:13:22 pm »

Good Job Goatboy!
I was no where close...

scottydo

A2 Flyer
Posts: 79

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #65 on: July 07, 2009, 11:32:14 pm »

Dang! Good job Goatboy

KevinW

A3+ Copper Bender
Posts: 174

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #66 on: July 08, 2009, 04:14:29 pm »

Quote from: goatboy on July 07, 2009, 11:58:47 am

C'mon out to the Black and I'll let you use the hammer any time Kevin...I'm too big for anything over A3 anyhow, you like decomposing pegmatite right?

Hey that sounds great goatboy!
Now this peg-ma-tite stuff, that is sort of granite.. right?
I'm used to chossy limestone, so it can't be that bad.. can it?
But with regards to anything above A3..
I'm not too big, rather too small, (in the testicle region) for any sustained A4'ish kind of stuff.

goatboy

A1 fiend
Posts: 42

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

« Reply #67 on: July 08, 2009, 09:49:05 pm »

You'll be fine, did I say the pitch was A4?oh no that can't be right, looks like easy A2, I think I see a bolt up there, you'll be fine, here's the rack.

deuce4

The Deuce
Administrator
A3+ Copper Bender
Posts: 182

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest

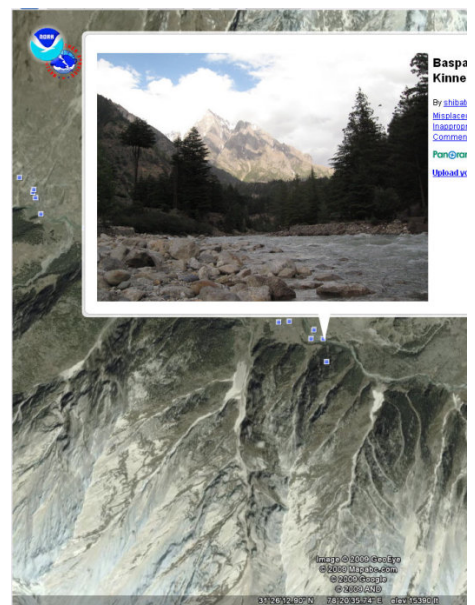
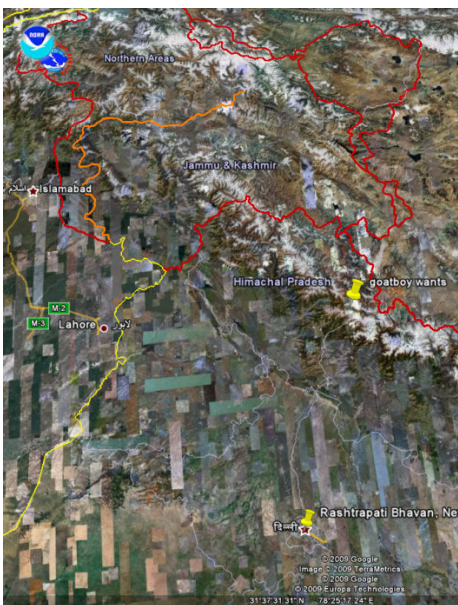
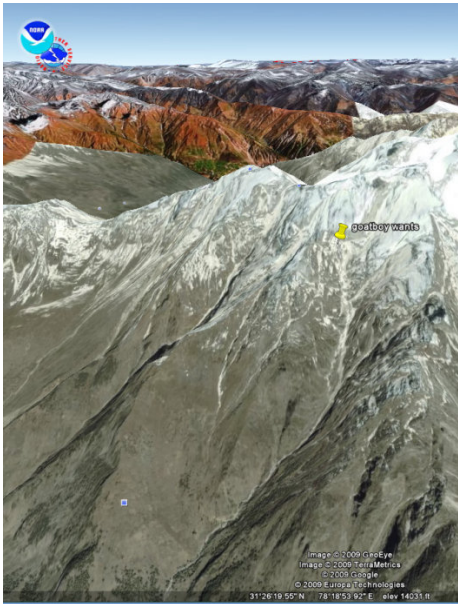
« Reply #68 on: September 10, 2009, 01:09:12 am »

Congrats again Goatboy. I am posting your images here just in case they get lost on some other server like some of the other posts on this thread:

The photo from the website:
<http://www.indiamike.com/photopost/showphoto.php/photo/30092/size/big/ppuser/32>



Goatboy's pics:



Let us know how go the adventures of the ol' hammer!

« Last Edit: September 11, 2009, 06:05:38 am by deuce4 »

Logged

Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

Re: Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest
« Reply #69 on: September 10, 2009, 07:46:08 pm »

Thanks again John!
I've owned three of these hammers in my life and have always ended up selling them for beer or gas money on the camp 4 board. This one is for keeps; it's already replaced a couple anchors in the south Platte and will soon be heading out to Utah.

As for Sangla Valley it's \$1,250 for a roundtrip from Denver to New Delhi then

goatboy
A1 fiend
Posts: 42

skully
Guest

deuce4
The Deuce
Administrator
A3+ Copper Bender
Posts: 182

goatboy
A1 fiend
Posts: 42

jake
A2 Flyer
Posts: 59

mungeclimber
Administrator
A4+ Dreamer
Posts: 2257

maybe another grand or two for the trek out to Batseri village and live like a king.
This hammer will see that valley eventually? **whoohoo!**

Logged

Re: **Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**
« Reply #70 on: September 10, 2009, 07:59:51 pm »

Right on, Goatboy, You're MY kinda monkey.....Let me know when you go, , cuz I wanta go, too.
Best contest ever, Big John. That was great fun.

Logged

Re: **Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**
« Reply #71 on: October 11, 2010, 03:52:05 pm »

Newsflash. This wall just got climbed by Silvia Vidal, the amazing Spanish big wall climber...
Hopefully she will send details soon.

Logged

Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

Re: **Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**
« Reply #72 on: October 13, 2010, 09:13:17 am »

Awesome, looking forward to some close up pictures of that wall!

Logged

Re: **Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**
« Reply #73 on: October 15, 2010, 12:39:47 pm »

<http://rockandice.com/news/1199-bold-is-not-dead>

Here is something I found about her climbing the wall... what a rad chick! Some misinformation in that article tho, she didn't solo the Reticent but did it with Pep Masip for the 3rd ascent. It also doesn't mention her route Sol Solet which was A5 and she used lead heads in some open corner over the course of 2 days! That route took a little over a month to put up... GNAR!!
« Last Edit: October 15, 2010, 01:00:45 pm by jake »

Logged

Re: **Free A5 Big Wall Hammer contest**
« Reply #74 on: October 17, 2010, 07:12:44 pm »

thx Jake. That's an amazing thing. High Commitment.



Big Wall Forum

Big Wall Climbing Forum--brought to you by the deuce!

News:
"It's a war of distance, and the battles are won in inches" - kristoffer

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Author

Topic: MYSTERY WALL CLIMBED! (Read 2850 times)

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deuce4
The Deuce
Administrator
A3+ Copper Bender
Posts: 182

MYSTERY WALL CLIMBED!
« on: October 17, 2010, 10:28:50 pm »

After seeing the bigwalls.net "Mystery Wall" hammer contest (<http://www.bigwalls.com/forum2/index.php?topic=96.0>), Silvia Vidal wrote to me for more info, which I happily provided, and now she has completed a route up this magnificent stone in one of the world's most beautiful places. She asked me if she should keep the name "Mystery Wall", but of course I told her she should name it whatever she likes!

Silvia Vidal has always been a hero of mine for her bold ascents, and was once featured in one of my A5 catalogs.

Here is the line:



From Silvia:
Hi John,
I'm sending you the information I've written from the ascent.
Also the line picture.
Thanks again for all.
Hug,
S7lvia

Here is some information about the last ascent I did this summer in Kinnaur Valley, India. It was a solo ascent and I spent 25 days (from 15th August to 8th September both included) on the wall, during this summer's strong monsoon. It has been a hard experience for me.
I went to India accompanied by my friend Eul7lia Sancho, she came to the BC and then left to continue her trip.
As always I didn't take a phone, Internet or any kind of device to communicate.

The result was ?Naufragi? (shipwreck in Catalan) 1.050 meters climbed, A4+/6a+ at 5.250m. in the Kailash Parbat range. I didn't get to the main summit of the

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mountain, which was still far away (I haven't seen it, it's a huge mountain), but to the end of the main wall.

A wall picture and its localization on Google Earth was all the information I had. I found it at John Middendorf's web page.
The area; Kinnaur valley, Himachal Pradesh, India.

Without knowing where to start the approach, once in the valley, showing the picture to the locals and taking some porters, we started to walk up in the middle of the rain.
They left the haulbags in the middle of the fog at 3.800m and left.
In the 7 days that I spent on this BC I never saw the whole wall. I spent two days trying to find the access to the wall because there was no visibility and I had no idea where the wall was.
I had to fix some ropes on the way up.
The approach to the wall is like trying to hike up a river ravine. Complicated and slippery.

I set ABC (4.430m) close to the wall, the portaledge hanging on a boulder, because there was no flat place to put the tent between the BC and the base of the wall.

I fixed the 3 first pitches (150m) and then spent 25 days hanging on the wall, alone, in horrible weather, because this year the monsoon has been very strong. A local newspaper published that the Kinnaur valley got 156% more rain than usual this year.
From the month and a half that I spent up on the mountain, there was rain and fog every single day.
One day, when jumaring, I lost consciousness, due to hypothermia because of excess of humidity.
I counted food and water for 18 days and finally I spent 25.

This and a bad logistic were the reason that more than once I thought to quit the route. But the motivation and the desire to stay there were stronger.
Fighting against my principles, from the 10th pitch (14 day) I started to make bat hooks (holes for hooks) to be able to progress through the monolithic faces. In some sections there was no natural line for extreme aid climbing.
I didn't have enough bolts (splits) and I wasn't able to descent from the route only for that reason. I down climbed part of a pitch but then I realised that I didn't want to leave the wall, I was too motivated to leave even if the weather was so bad and it took me too much efforts so far. I always thought that the weather was going to change, but it didn't...
I tried not to use the bat hooks to increase the aid climbing grade. I mean; the A4 and A4+ are naturals, without drilled holes. That's the price I had to pay for going on an expedition without knowing about the area and the wall. And I need to explain it.

Logged

Thanks for visiting the Big Walls Forum!!
John Middendorf

mungeclimber

Administrator
A4+ Dreamer
2257
Posts: 2257

Re: MYSTERY WALL CLIMBED!
« Reply #1 on: October 17, 2010, 10:56:28 pm »

such deep digging. It's hard to imagine the fortitude and discipline it took to keep going.

goatboy

A1 fend
42
Posts: 42

johnmac

A4+ Dreamer
486
Posts: 486

Mucci

A4+ Dreamer
422
Posts: 422

lambone

WebDJ
A4+ Dreamer
571
Posts: 571

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Re: MYSTERY WALL CLIMBED!
« Reply #2 on: October 18, 2010, 03:13:59 pm »

Wow what a great adventure, congratulations Silvia!

Re: MYSTERY WALL CLIMBED!
« Reply #3 on: October 19, 2010, 11:59:27 am »

wow, what an amazing effort...

Re: MYSTERY WALL CLIMBED!
« Reply #4 on: February 15, 2012, 09:31:39 pm »

Bump!

Sargentana on the porcelin wall fell to this FA'lst.

So rad, take a pic and a few months and crush something like this....

inspirational.

AAJ 2010 was a good read.

Re: MYSTERY WALL CLIMBED!
« Reply #5 on: February 15, 2012, 09:52:30 pm »

That's badass!

PRINT
« previous next »

Image activities

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Information

001Welcome.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 1008x1512

File size: 125975 bytes

Date: 3/8/03 9:06 PM

Powered by JAlbum

001Welcome.jpg (1 of 140)

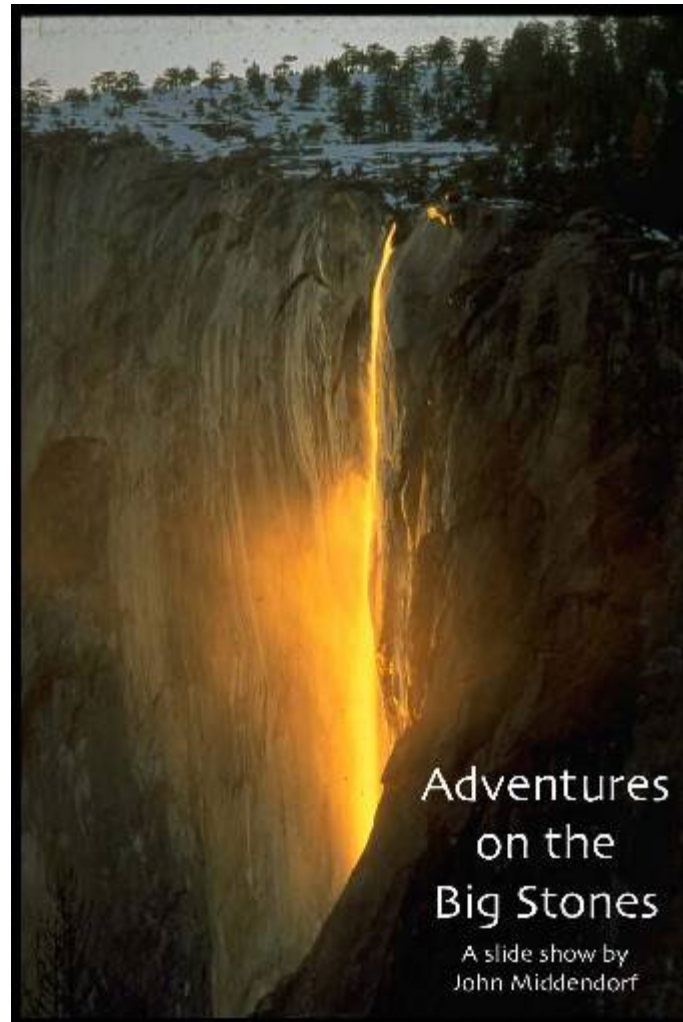


Image activities

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Information

002.jpg

JPEG

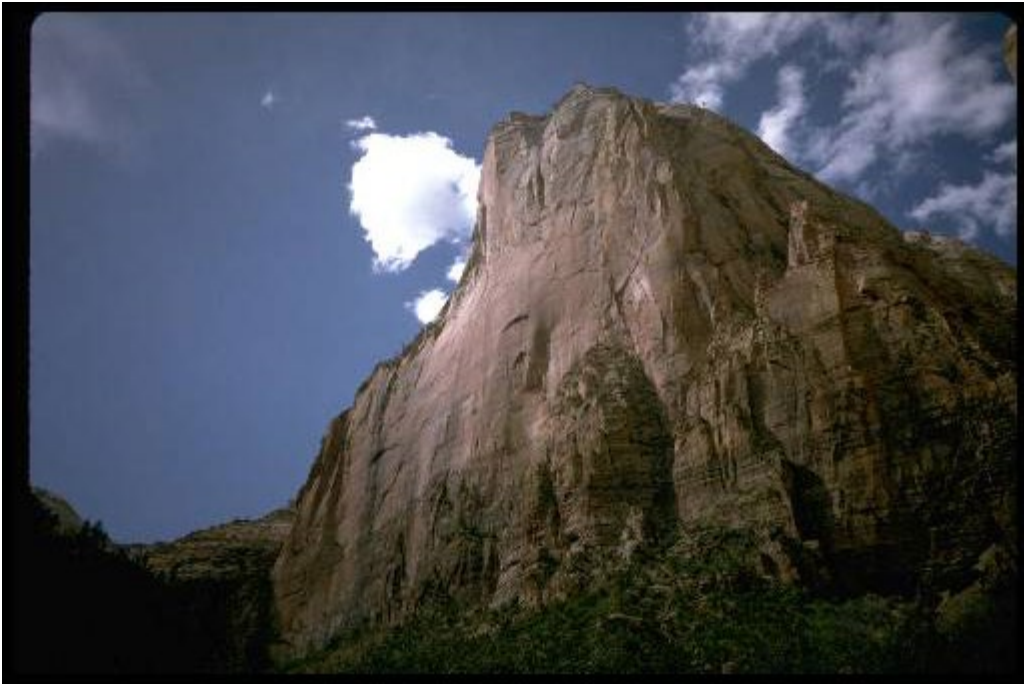
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3525587 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:15 PM

Powered by JAlbum

002.jpg (2 of 140)



Big Walls! What are they all about?

Image activities

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Information

003.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4278306 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:15 PM

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003.jpg (3 of 140)



Big Walls are about tools...

Image activities

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Information

004.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4046400 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:15 PM

Powered by JAlbum

004.jpg (4 of 140)



and climbing with tools...

Image activities

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Information

005.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4238222 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:16 PM

Powered by JAlbum

005.jpg (5 of 140)



Hauling big bags. As big walls generally require overnight bivies, one has to haul all the food and water, etc. with them.

Image activities

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Information

006.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3847395 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:16 PM

Powered by JAlbum

006.jpg (6 of 140)



fantastic bivouacs...

Image activities

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Information

007.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3016213 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:16 PM

Powered by JAlbum

007.jpg (7 of 140)



and gorgeous sunsets.

Image activities

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Information

008.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3876970 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:16 PM

Powered by JAlbum

008.jpg (8 of 140)



My own yearnings for heights began where I was born, New York City.

Image activities

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Information

009.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3617989 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:17 PM

Powered by JAlbum

009.jpg (9 of 140)



I liked the views!

Image activities

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Information

010.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4138013 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:17 PM

Powered by JAlbum

010.jpg (10 of 140)



I learned back in the days of hexentrics and stoppers only.

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Information

011.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3184281 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:17 PM

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011.jpg (11 of 140)



and EB's, the anti-sticky rubber of the day.

Image activities

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Information

012.jpg

JPEG

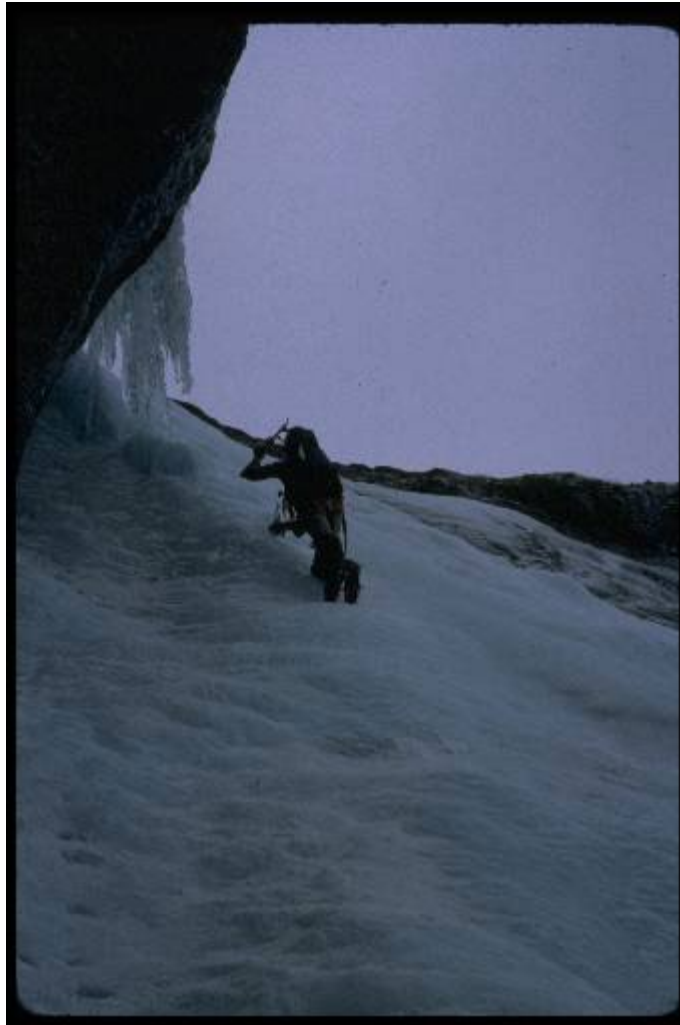
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3868462 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:18 PM

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012.jpg (12 of 140)



Back East, my friends and I learned on the local ice...

Image activities

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Information

013.jpg

JPEG

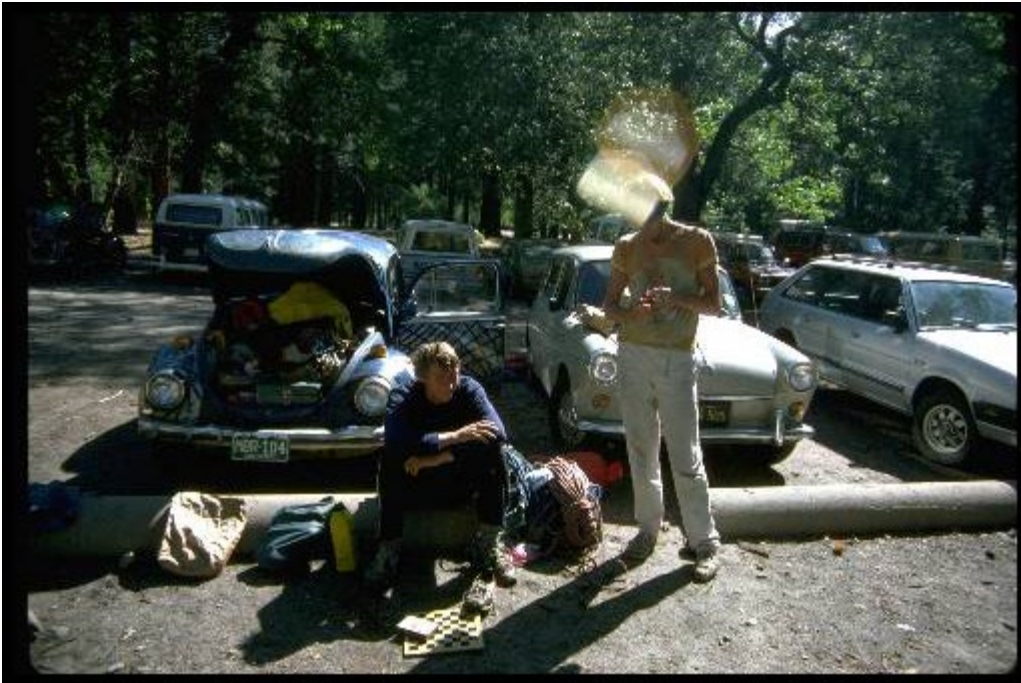
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4335428 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:18 PM

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013.jpg (13 of 140)



My first trip to Yosemite was when I was 17, in 1977.

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Information

014.jpg

JPEG

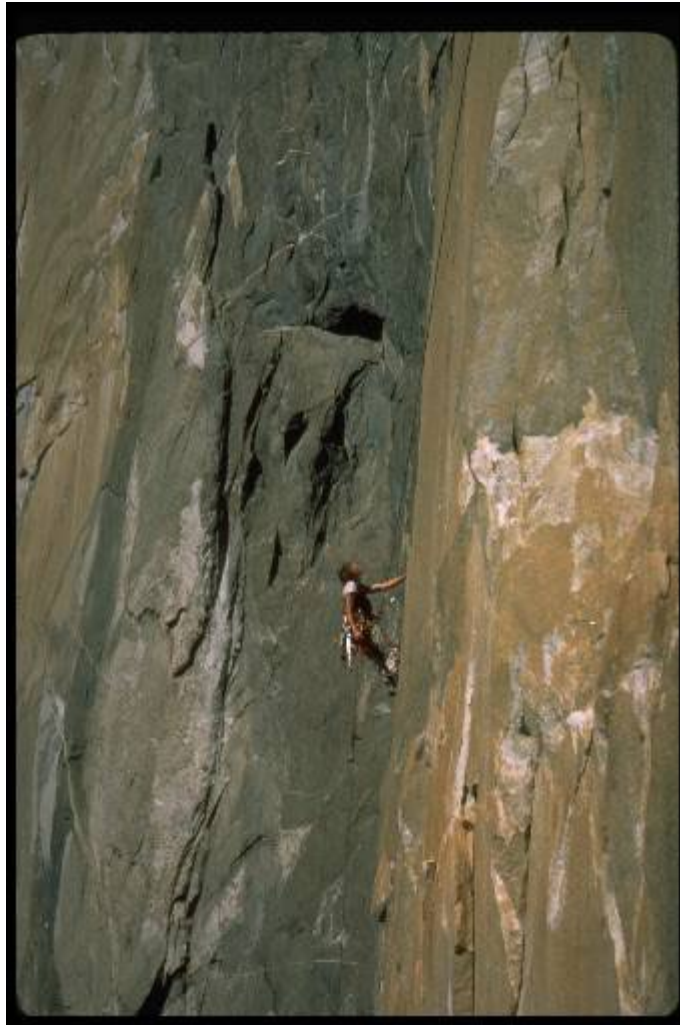
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3763046 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:18 PM

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014.jpg (14 of 140)



After success on Half Dome, we tried to climb the Big Stone next to the road, El Capitan.

Image activities

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Information

015.jpg

JPEG

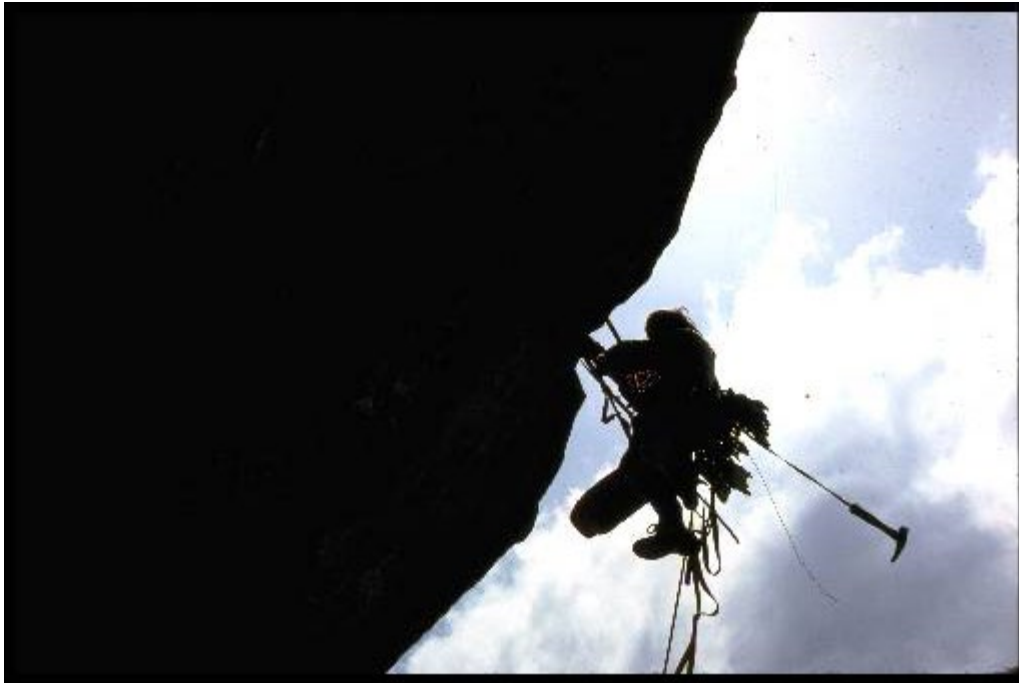
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 1826059 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:18 PM

Powered by JAlbum

015.jpg (15 of 140)



Here on the Shield, the big roof, the point of no return. There were big earthquakes that season, which scared us, and we came down. Only later did we realize that the safest spot in the Valley was here, with 1500 feet of overhanging wall above us!

Image activities

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Information

016.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4168042 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:18 PM

Powered by JAlbum

016.jpg (16 of 140)



So it was back to the drawing board, training on the local boulders.

Image activities

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Information

017.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3800972 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:19 PM

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017.jpg (17 of 140)



And training new partners. It was always difficult to find partners in those days, so it was necessary to show people the ropes, so to speak.

Image activities

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Information

018.jpg

JPEG

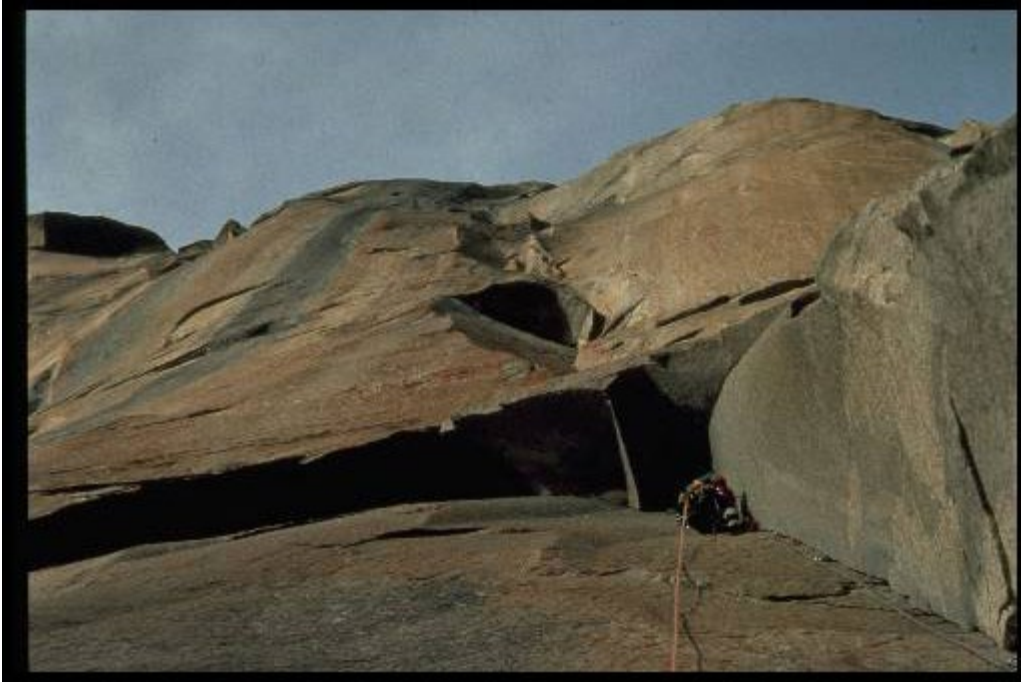
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4038012 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:19 PM

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018.jpg (18 of 140)



And then it was back to the big stones!

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Information

019.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3694729 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:19 PM

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019.jpg (19 of 140)



During those early years, I learned the basics of climbing with big racks.

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Information

020.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3670706 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:20 PM

Powered by JAlbum

020.jpg (20 of 140)



Gained some confidence...

Image activities

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Information

021.jpg

JPEG

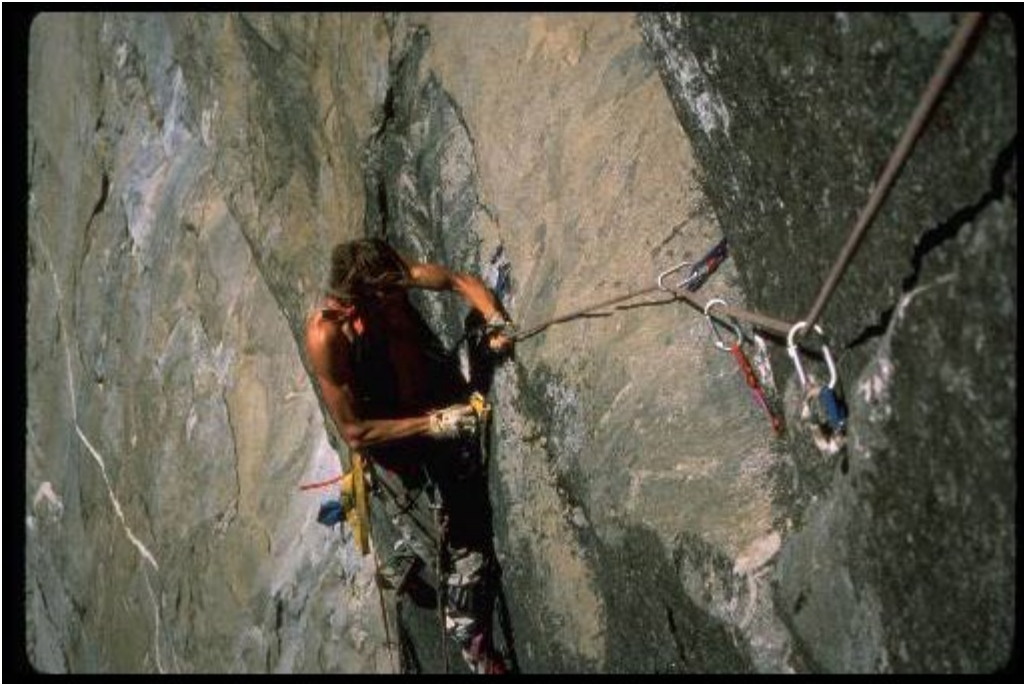
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4048272 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:20 PM

Powered by JAlbum

021.jpg (21 of 140)



Got stronger...

Image activities

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Information

022.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3994512 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:20 PM

Powered by JAlbum

022.jpg (22 of 140)



And soon became interested in putting up new routes. Here is the right side of El Cap, the North American Wall section. I picked out an unclimbed line to the right of the NA diorite.

Image activities

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Information

023.jpg

JPEG

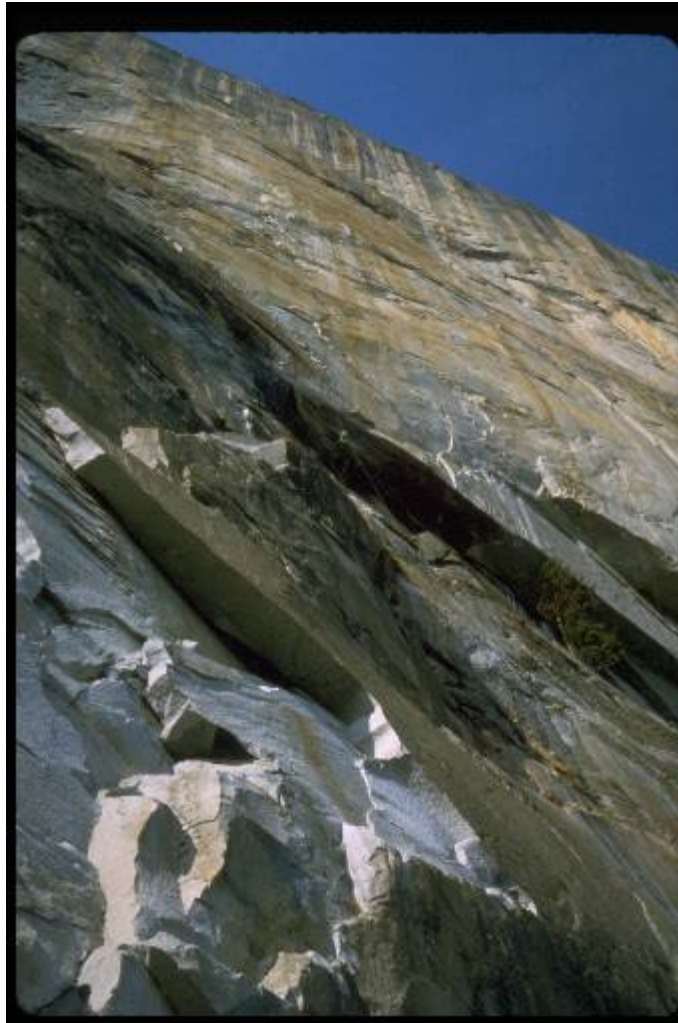
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3965759 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:20 PM

Powered by JAlbum

023.jpg (23 of 140)



The beginning was very loose. This section has since fallen off. Even when we were there it was cracking and groaning.

Image activities

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Information

024.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3929351 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:20 PM

Powered by JAlbum

024.jpg (24 of 140)



The big roof on Atlantic Ocean Wall. Definitely the most fear I had ever experienced at the time.

Image activities

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Information

025.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3872799 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:21 PM

Powered by JAlbum

025.jpg (25 of 140)



Then onto some dicey expando. This was before small camming units, so everything was falling out of this very technical section (was A5, now A2 because of the camming technology available today).

Image activities

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Information

026.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4061483 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:21 PM

Powered by JAlbum

026.jpg (26 of 140)



In 1986 I got caught in a storm with my partners Steve Bosque and Mike Corbett, on the South Face of Half Dome.

Image activities

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Information

027.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3801246 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:21 PM

Powered by JAlbum

027.jpg (27 of 140)



The storm was really bad. The portaedges of the day couldn't withstand the constant pounding and wind.

Image activities

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Information

028.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3701353 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:22 PM

Powered by JAlbum

028.jpg (28 of 140)



After a major effort by our friends led by Werner Braun, who hiked up six miles in chest deep snow where the first view of the South Face of Half Dome is possible, the Lemore Naval base was alerted, and a heroic rescue saved us from certain death by hypothermia.

Image activities

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Information

029.jpg

JPEG

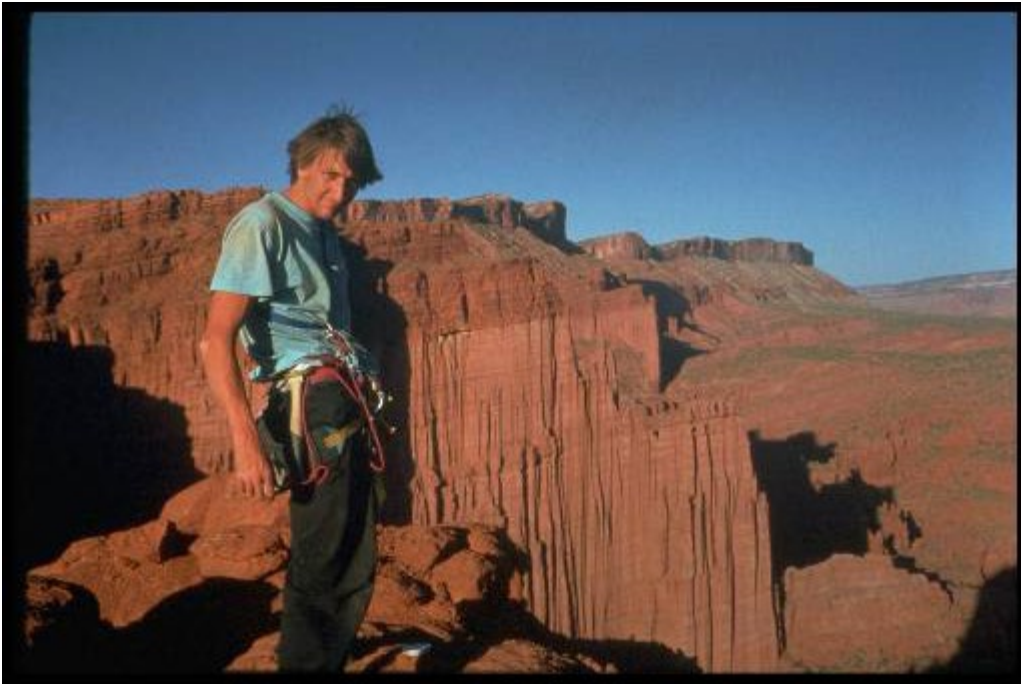
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3668574 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:22 PM

Powered by JAlbum

029.jpg (29 of 140)



So after that, I moved to the desert, to some warmer climes. I gave up wall climbing for quite some time.

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Information

030.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3980082 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:22 PM

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030.jpg (30 of 140)



In Arizona, I began A5 Adventures, to make climbing gear. Specifically, a better portaledge, so no other climbers would have to experience the same fate as us on Half Dome. My engineering training finally came in handy.

Image activities

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Information

031.jpg

JPEG

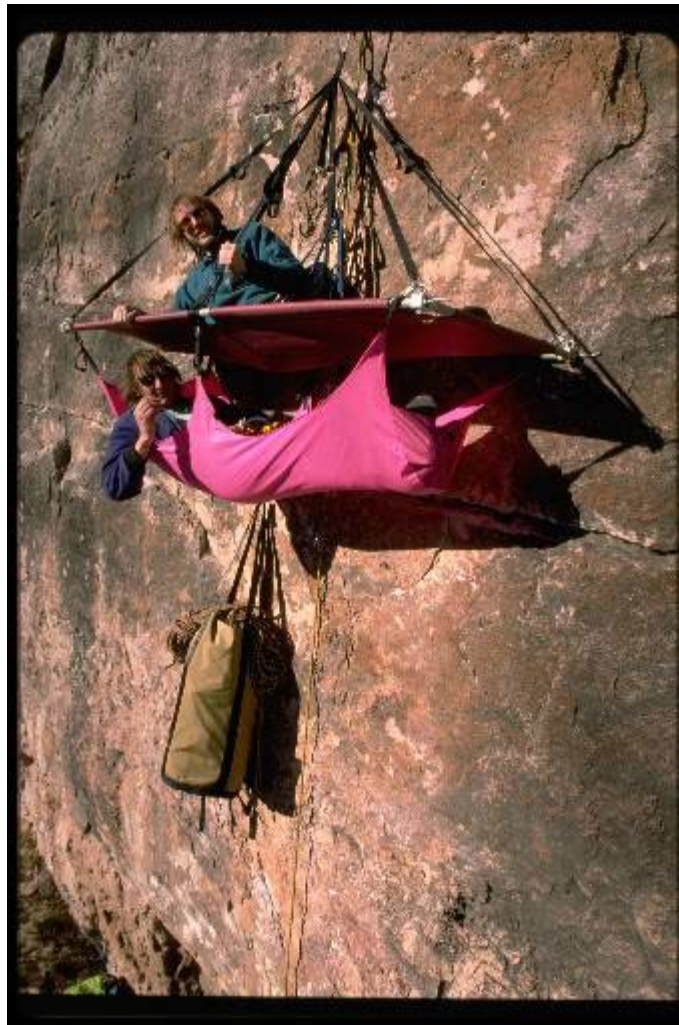
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4738689 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:22 PM

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031.jpg (31 of 140)



Here's one of our early prototypes.

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Information

032.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3641417 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:22 PM

Powered by JAlbum

032.jpg (32 of 140)



And our hi-tech fabric testing equipment.

Image activities

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Information

033.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4126660 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:23 PM

Powered by JAlbum

033.jpg (33 of 140)



I got into the science of climbing, testing bolts. This is where we discovered that the 1/4" bolts in common use of the day weren't really that consistently strong.

Image activities

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Information

034.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3509308 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:23 PM

Powered by JAlbum

034.jpg (34 of 140)



Giving up big wall climbing (for the time being), I got into some other adrenaline pursuits, like paragliding. After a hundred flights and a couple successful pioneering cliff launches, I broke my talus in half in Chamonix and gave it up.

Image activities

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Information

035.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3456070 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:23 PM

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035.jpg (35 of 140)



Spent some time learning to kayak!

Image activities

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Information

036.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3494870 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:23 PM

Powered by JAlbum

036.jpg (36 of 140)



More ice climbing, including some soloing...

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Information

037.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3718826 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:24 PM

Powered by JAlbum

037.jpg (37 of 140)



And soon I discovered the lure of the Desert Spire!

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Information

038.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4036555 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:24 PM

Powered by JAlbum

038.jpg (38 of 140)



Climbed a bunch of new routes in this area, but can't really talk about it (generally I got permission from befriending locals).

Image activities

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Information

039.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3505829 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:24 PM

Powered by JAlbum

039.jpg (39 of 140)



Here's the Stagecoach and the Bear and Rabbit. We climbed the first ascent of the Bear, roughly in the center.

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Information

040.jpg

JPEG

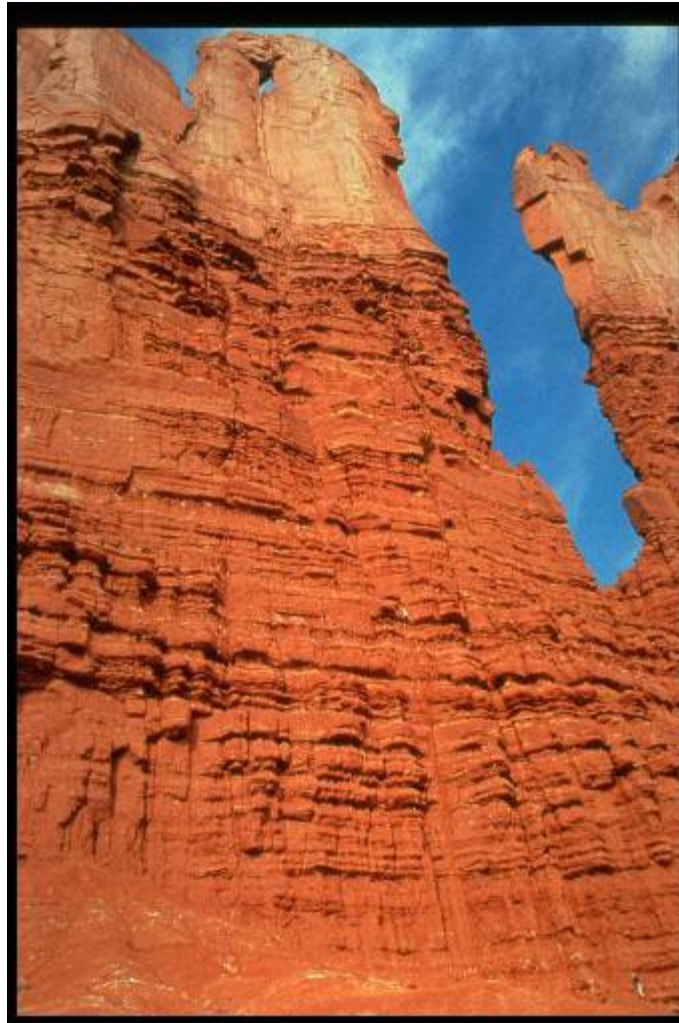
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4460237 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:24 PM

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040.jpg (40 of 140)



The first 200 feet of the Bear was pure rottenness. My partner, Jimmy Dunn, called this the "my hero" pitch after I essentially soloed the 5.9 rubble first pitch.

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Information

041.jpg

JPEG

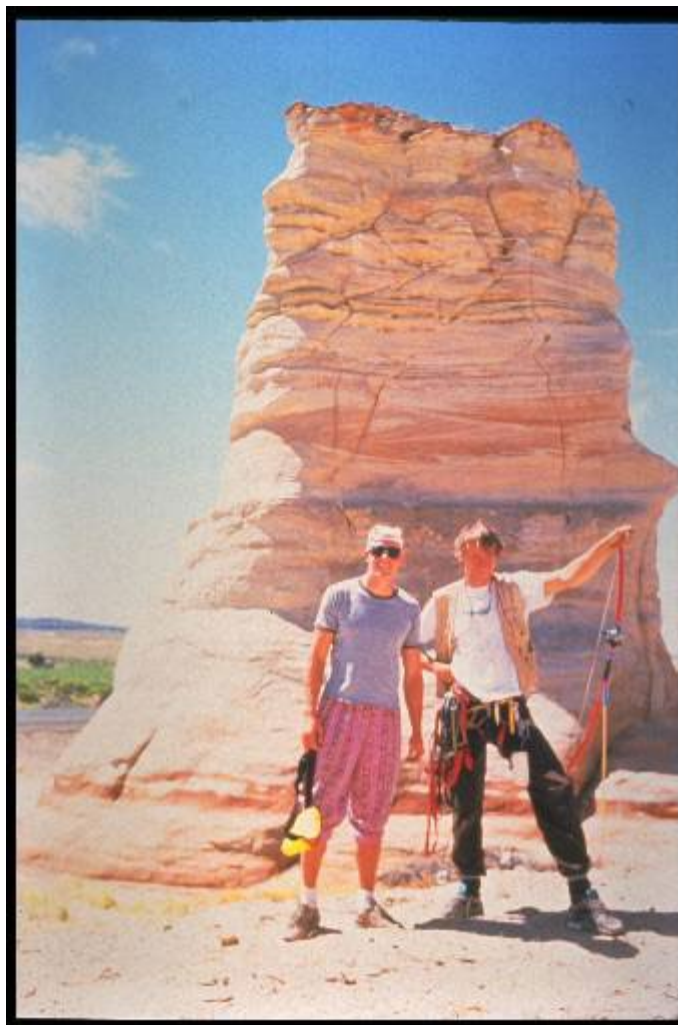
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4458392 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:25 PM

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041.jpg (41 of 140)



Some of the spires took to alternate techniques. Carl Tobin and I climbed the first ascent of the north Elephant's Foot with a bow and arrow of my devising. After shooting a fishing line over, we used that to pull sucessively larger ropes over, until we were able to tie the final climbing rope to the bumper of my car and jumar up the other side!

Image activities

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Information

042.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4108398 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:25 PM

Powered by JAlbum

042.jpg (42 of 140)



Even though I had sworn off big walls for good in 1986, by 1989 they were grabbing my attention again. Walt Shipley had been attempting a solo of a new route on the NW face of Half Dome. He was getting burned out and asked me to join him for this new route, later called the Kali Yuga.

Image activities

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Information

043.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4310129 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:25 PM

Powered by JAlbum

043.jpg (43 of 140)



Although terrified to be on the same rock that I had been rescued on 3 years earlier, the climbing was magnificent.

Image activities

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Information

044.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4248901 bytes

Date: 6/17/03 12:49 AM

Powered by JAlbum

044.jpg (44 of 140)



Here a difficult pendulum, used to gain the crack seen on the far right.

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Information

045.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3889568 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:26 PM

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045.jpg (45 of 140)



After our successful ascent and no storms, we had a fine bivy on top. Full moon, along with a bunch of dead heads who came up and danced all night on top.

Image activities

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Information

046.jpg

JPEG

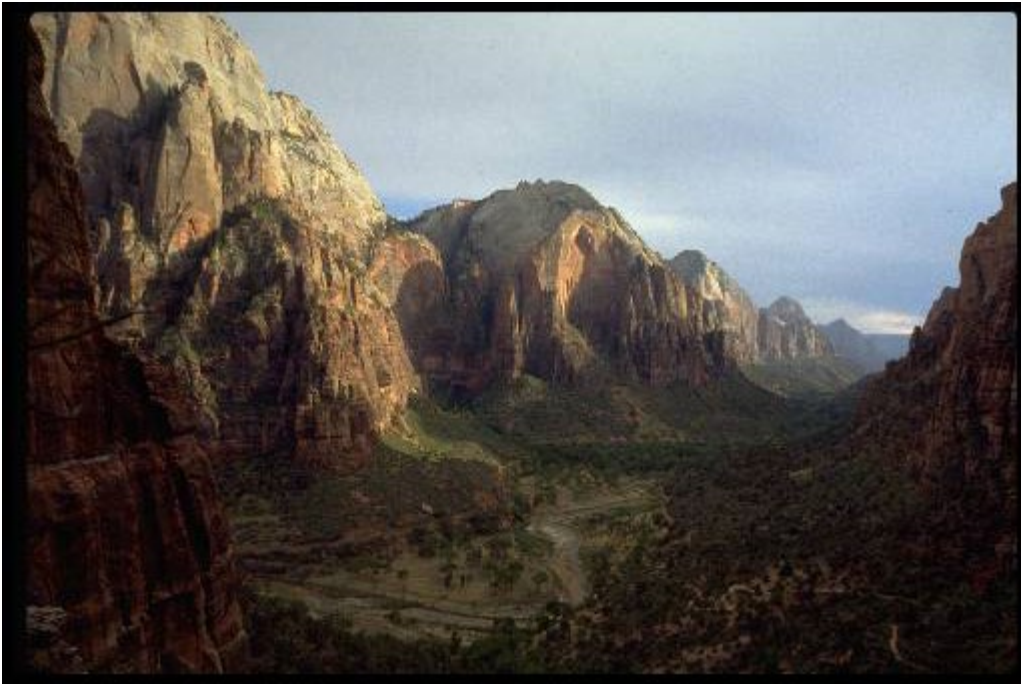
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4274932 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:26 PM

Powered by JAlbum

046.jpg (46 of 140)



Then I discovered the big walls in my own back yard, Zion!

Image activities

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Information

047.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4304119 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:26 PM

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047.jpg (47 of 140)



Lots and lots of walls in Zion, probably more vertical than in Yosemite. Nothing as big as El Cap, but perhaps 20 Half Dome sized stones (2000 feet).

Image activities

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Information

048.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4046003 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:26 PM

Powered by JAlbum

048.jpg (48 of 140)



Although initially a seemingly barren place, the beauty of the desert soon captured my heart.

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Information

049.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4110260 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:26 PM

Powered by JAlbum

049.jpg (49 of 140)



Here's the ultra fragile so called CryptoSoil, which takes decades to grow, and milliseconds to crush. It is essential to life in the desert, so please be careful!

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Information

050.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4145918 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:27 PM

Powered by JAlbum

050.jpg (50 of 140)



The beauty of the sandstone.

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Information

051.jpg

JPEG

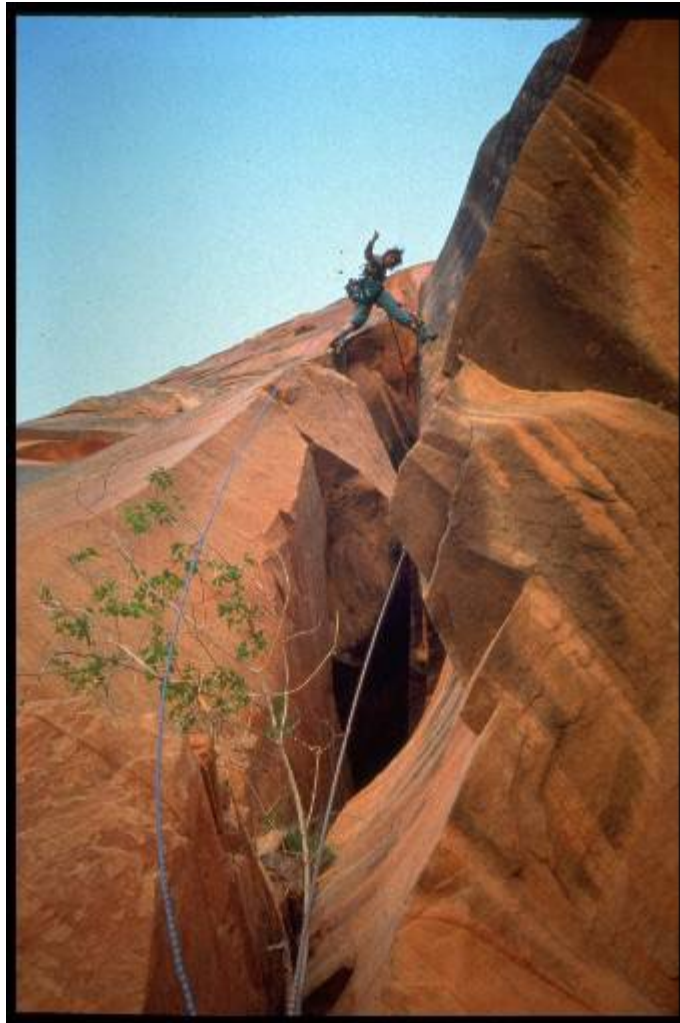
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4242617 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:27 PM

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051.jpg (51 of 140)



The geometry of the sandstone cracks is so wild, makes for interesting climbing too!

Image activities

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Information

052.jpg

JPEG

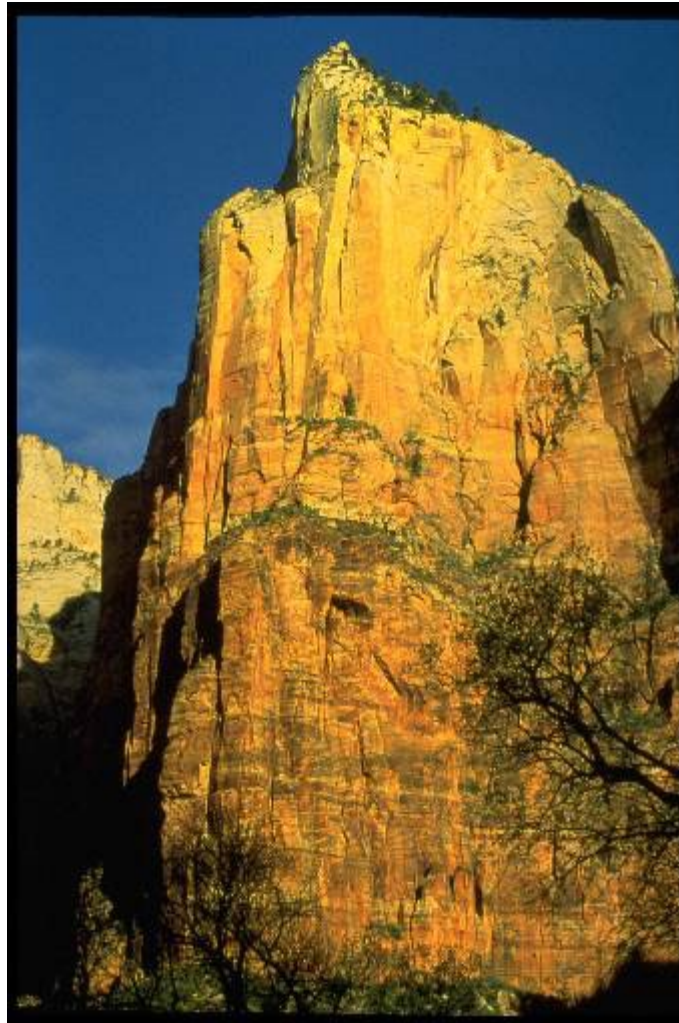
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4556396 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:27 PM

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052.jpg (52 of 140)



This is Issac, the middle of the Three Patriarchs in Zion. Brad Quinn, Bill Hatcher, Calvin Hebert and I did a new route up the center.

Image activities

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Information

053.jpg

JPEG

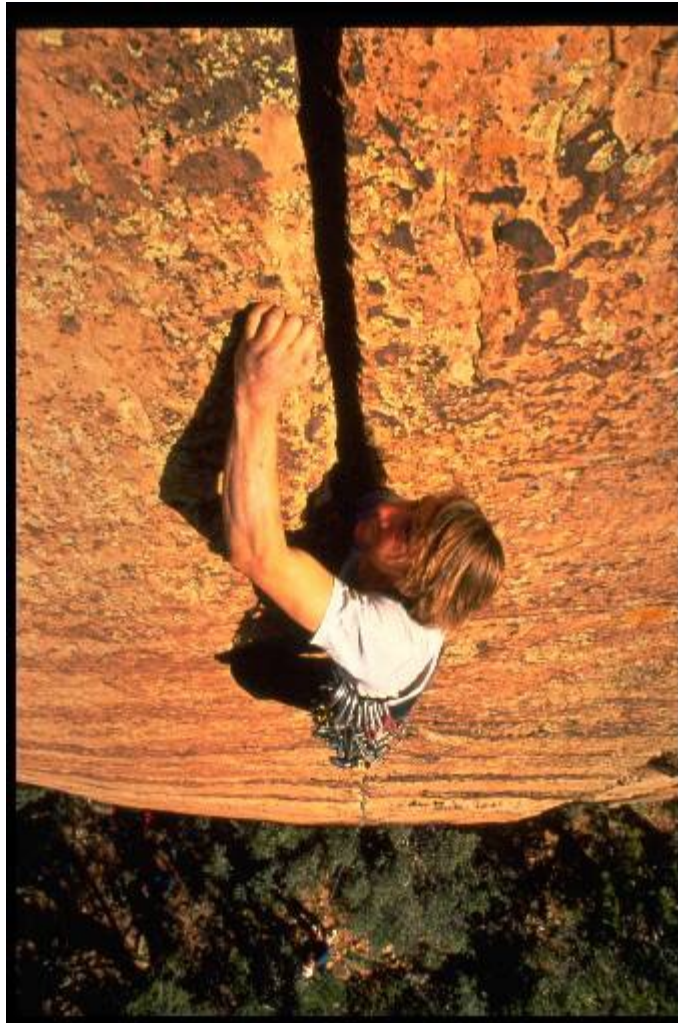
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4599859 bytes

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053.jpg (53 of 140)



If you want to climb in Zion, one must master the lost art of wide cracks.

Image activities

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Information

054.jpg

JPEG

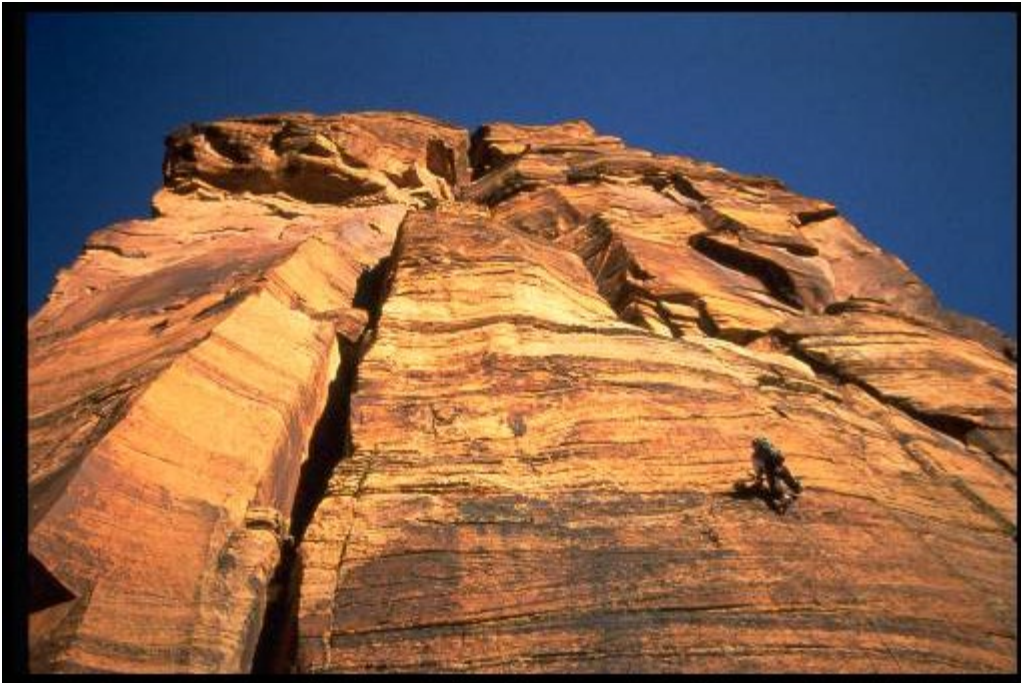
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4370398 bytes

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054.jpg (54 of 140)



The first day..

Image activities

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Information

055.jpg

JPEG

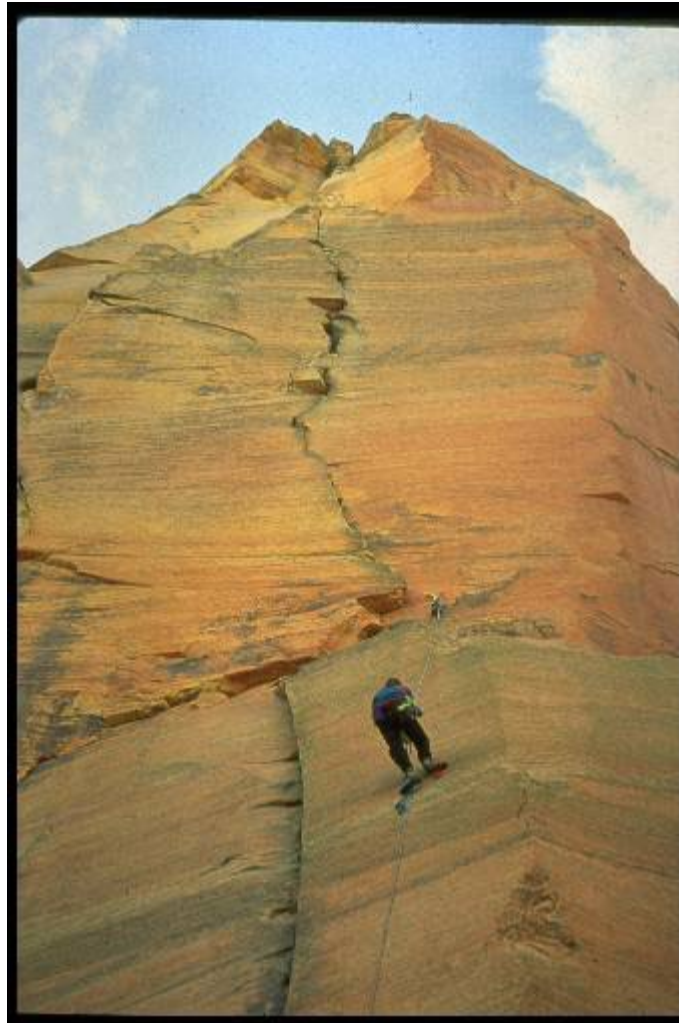
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4398166 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:28 PM

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055.jpg (55 of 140)



Soon we approached the headwall. When scoping a new route on a big wall, even with telescopes it is difficult to gauge the exact crack size. We were hoping for a beauty.

Image activities

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Information

056.jpg

JPEG

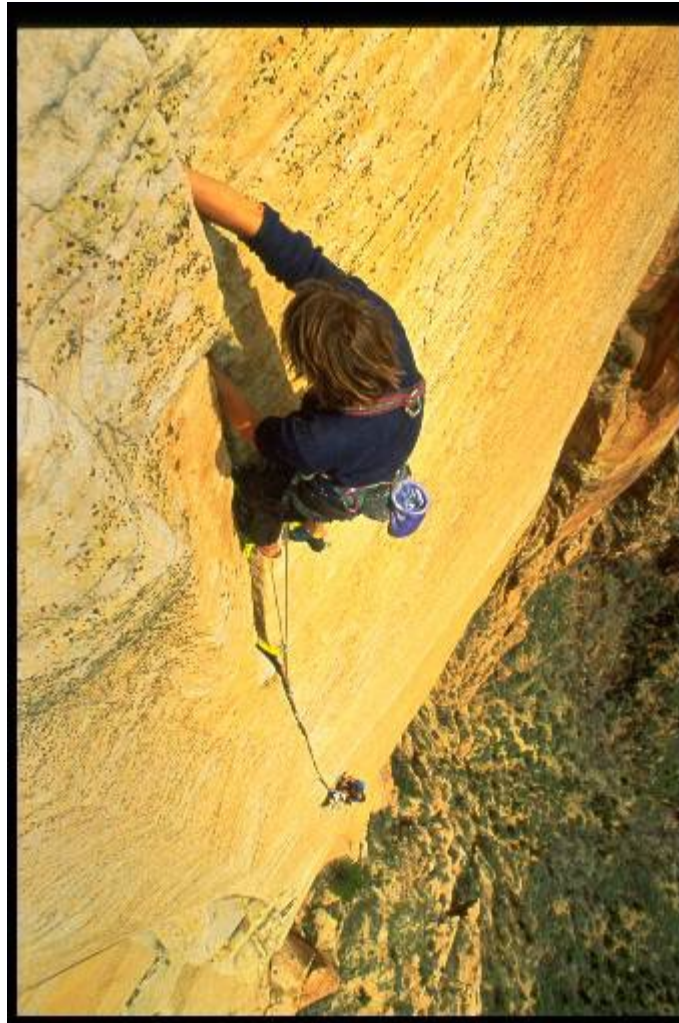
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4756076 bytes

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056.jpg (56 of 140)



And what we found was a beautimus 500 hand crack, every crack climber's dream!

Image activities

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Information

057.jpg

JPEG

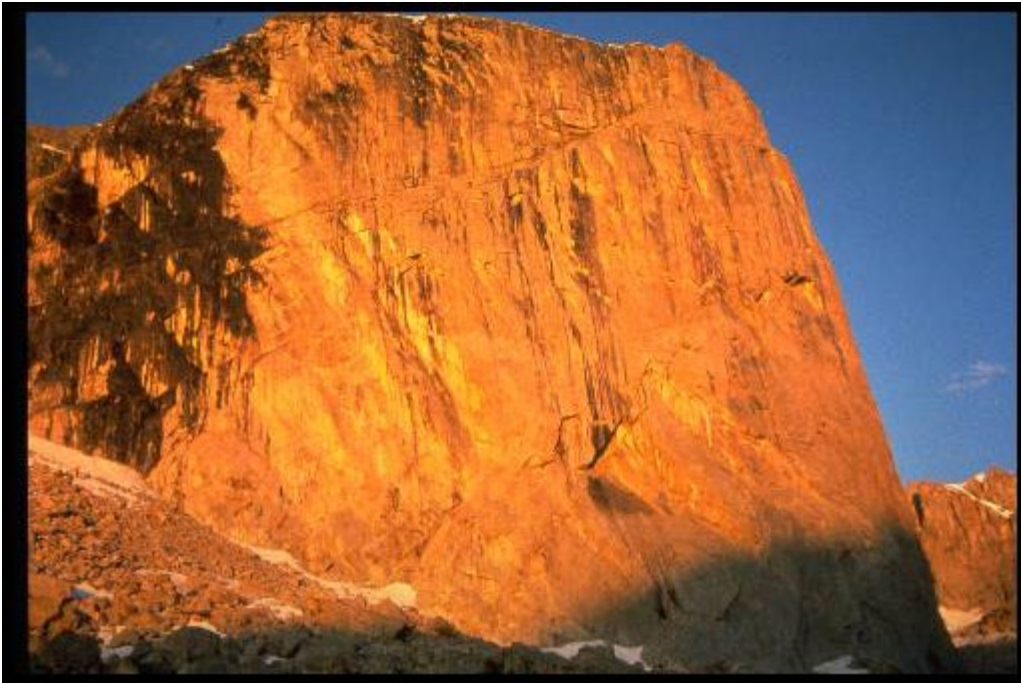
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4346080 bytes

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Powered by JAlbum

057.jpg (57 of 140)



Another locale, the Wind Rivers.

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Information

058.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4337554 bytes

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Powered by JAlbum

058.jpg (58 of 140)



Steve Quinlan and I made three trips spread out over 4 years to climb Mt. Hooker. Each was a mini-expedition.

Image activities

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Information

059.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4093708 bytes

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Powered by JAlbum

059.jpg (59 of 140)



The first year we got tons of snow.

Image activities

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Information

060.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3929782 bytes

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060.jpg (60 of 140)



The next year it rained the while time.

Image activities

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Information

061.jpg

JPEG

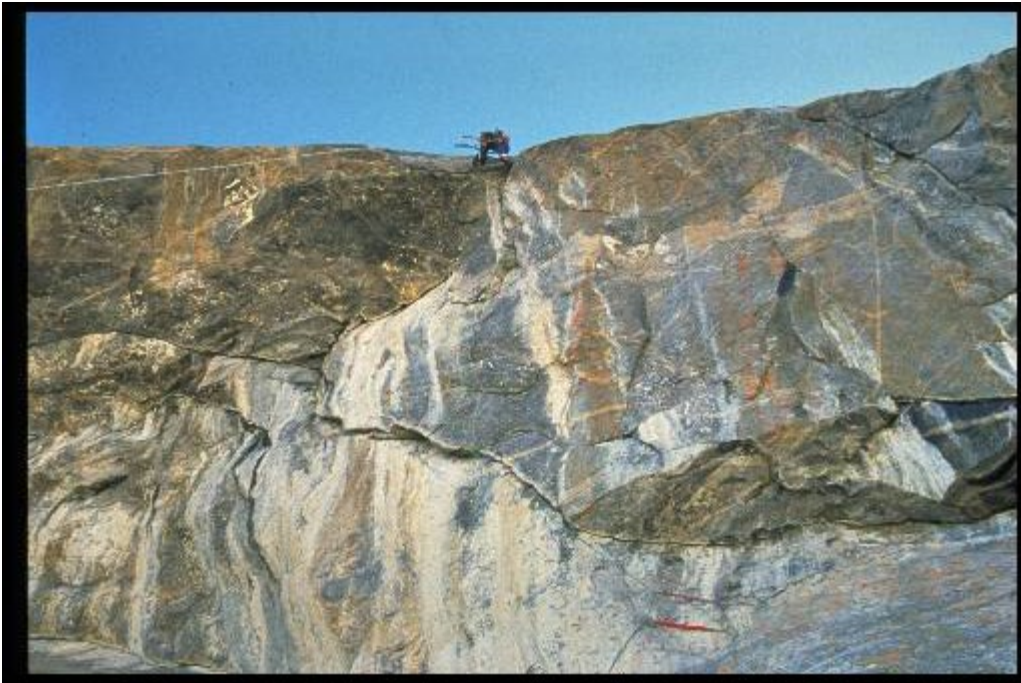
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4638559 bytes

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061.jpg (61 of 140)



Finally on our third attempt we had spectacular weather and here's Steve climbing over the big roof that inspired the name for the route: The Third Eye,

Image activities

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Information

062.jpg

JPEG

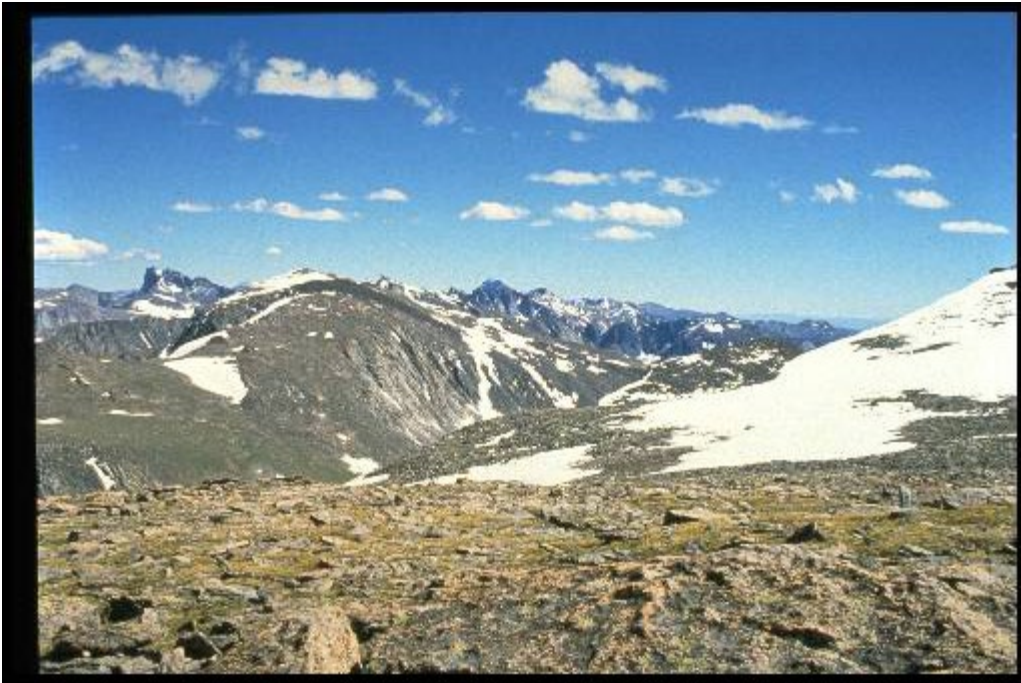
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4749717 bytes

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062.jpg (62 of 140)



On top, a nice view, but after all, it was only a hour hike down the back side.

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Information

063.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4737187 bytes

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063.jpg (63 of 140)



Another fine wall, in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison. No one had ever attempted a wall in Winter by 1992. Mugs Stump invited me for a try.

Image activities

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Information

064.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4191436 bytes

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064.jpg (64 of 140)



Once down in the bottom of the canyon, it felt very committing, with the roar of the river and the lack of any sun.

Image activities

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Information

065.jpg

JPEG

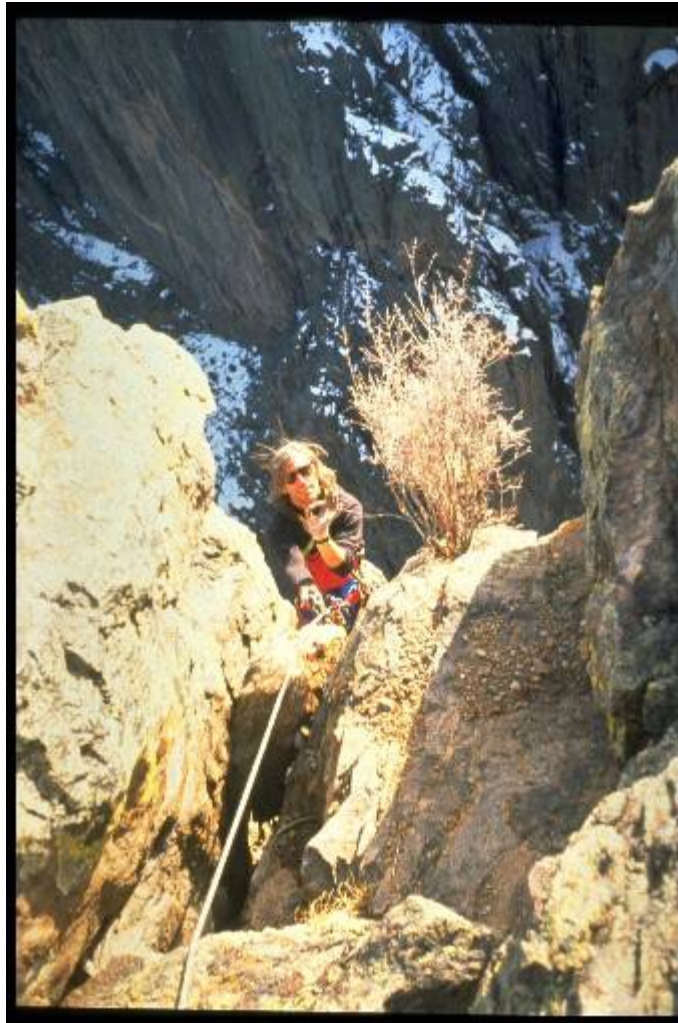
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4509489 bytes

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065.jpg (65 of 140)



Here's Mugs coming over the top! He died later that summer. He is sorely missed.

Image activities

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Information

066.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4561028 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:31 PM

Powered by JAlbum

066.jpg (66 of 140)

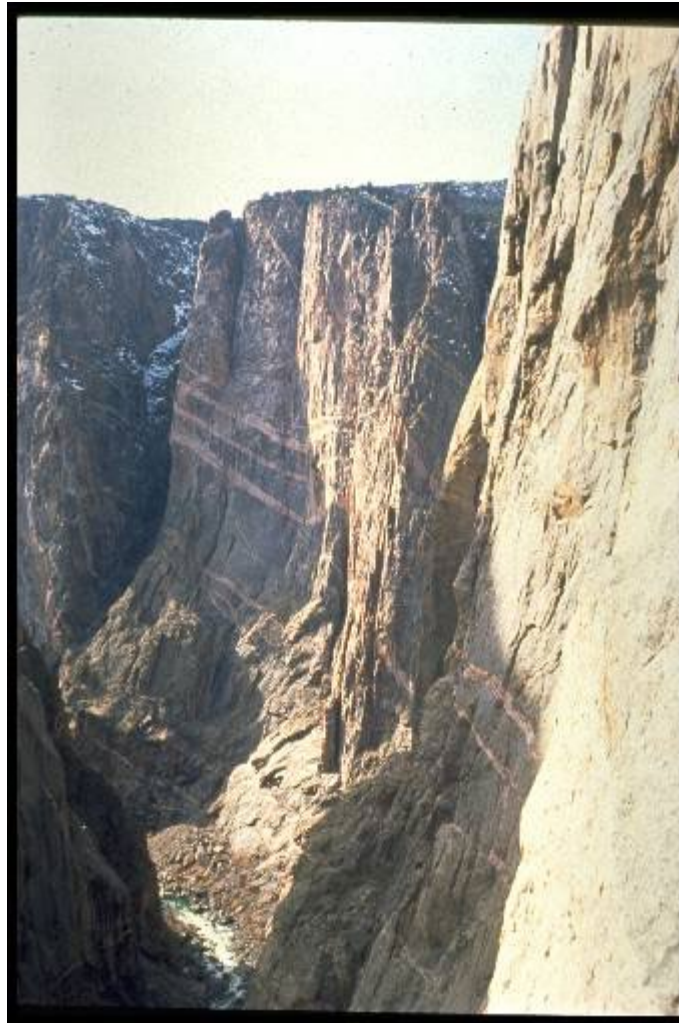


Image activities

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Information

067.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3820243 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:31 PM

Powered by JAlbum

067.jpg (67 of 140)



During those years, I had been designing and refining the portaledge. Here is one in action on a ascent of Tribal Rite, where it stormed every day. After this ascent, I knew that the A5 ledges could take just about any storm, which was fortunate for my next adventure...

Image activities

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Information

068.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3602505 bytes

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068.jpg (68 of 140)



The Great Trango Towers in Pakistan. These are the biggest rock faces in the world. The summits are over 20,000 feet above sea level.

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Information

069.jpg

JPEG

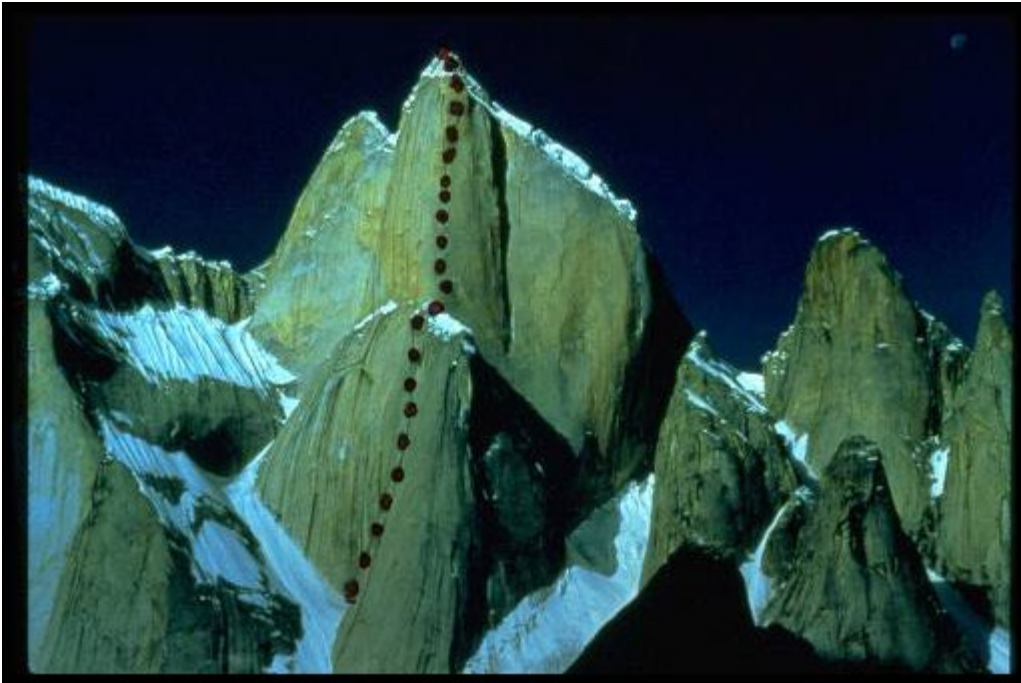
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3741777 bytes

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069.jpg (69 of 140)



Xaver Bongard and I picked this line on the Great Trango Tower. We spent weeks preparing getting stuff to the base, then spent 18 days on the wall, 15 days up, and 3 days descending the route.

Image activities

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Information

070.jpg

JPEG

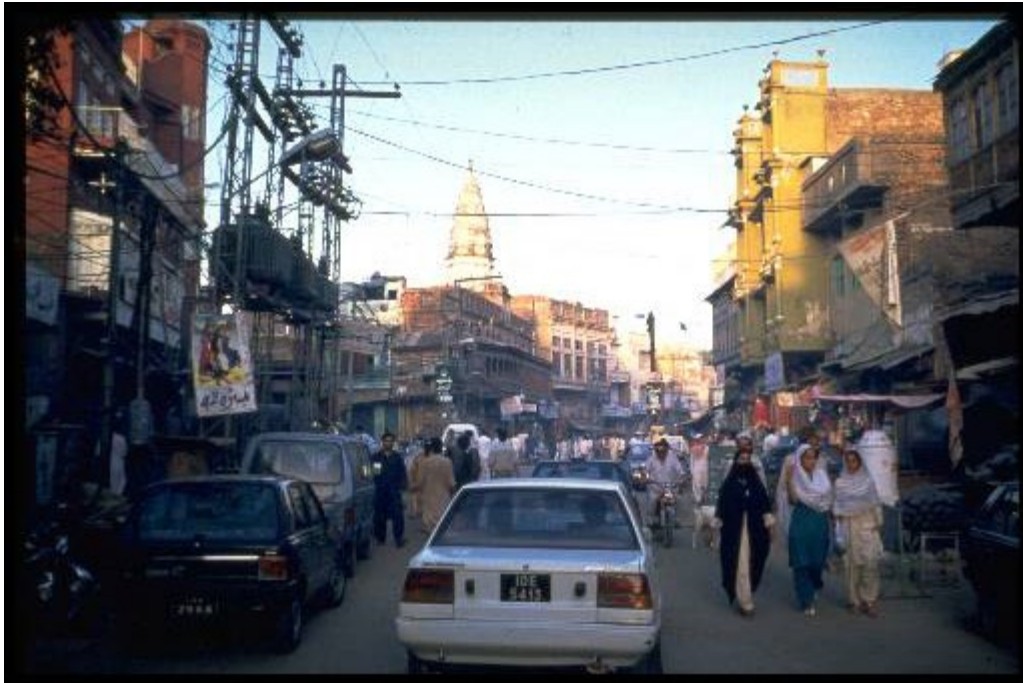
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3807232 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 3:32 PM

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070.jpg (70 of 140)



Like all good adventures, this one began in the dusty city of Rawalpindi.

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Information

071.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3842259 bytes

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071.jpg (71 of 140)



Staying in shape is difficult as the paperwork is processed, so we kept our eye out for local challenges.

Image activities

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Information

072.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3957511 bytes

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072.jpg (72 of 140)



After 10 days in Rawlpindi, we hired this bus to take us to Skardu.

Image activities

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Information

073.jpg

JPEG

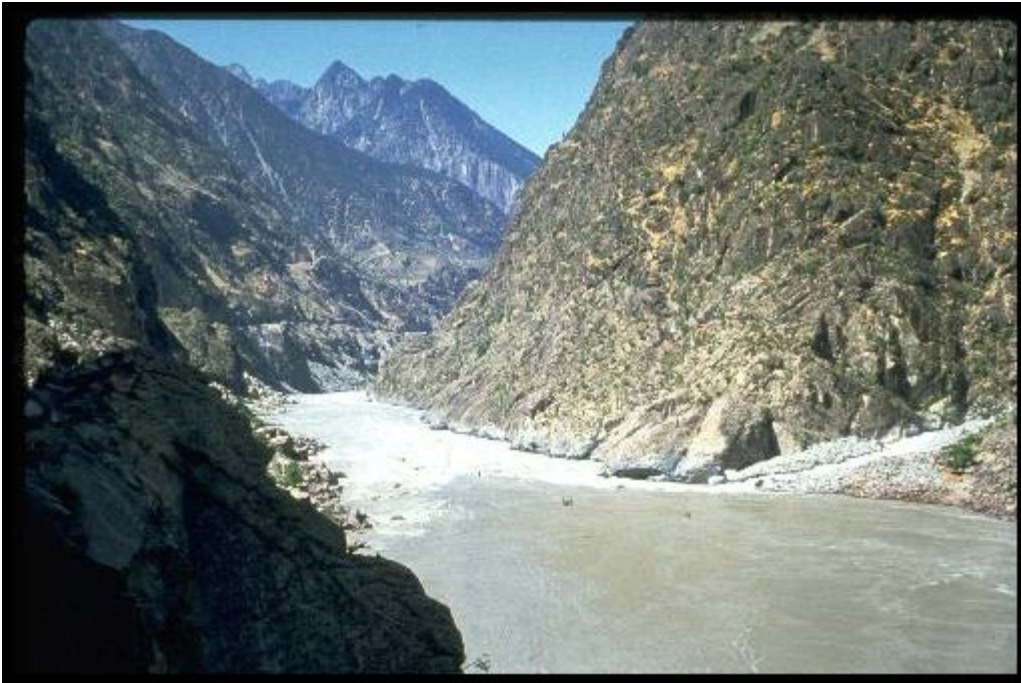
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4462515 bytes

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073.jpg (73 of 140)



Wild driving along mountain roads. Several buses crashed off the road that year.

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Information

074.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3908375 bytes

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Powered by JAlbum

074.jpg (74 of 140)



From Skardu, we hired jeeps to take us to Askole.

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Information

075.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

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075.jpg (75 of 140)



On the way, we hired our porters.

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Information

076.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4203410 bytes

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076.jpg (76 of 140)



And finally began our 50 mile, 3 day trek to basecamp.

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Information

077.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3520718 bytes

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077.jpg (77 of 140)



Our porters were great, both young..

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Information

078.jpg

JPEG

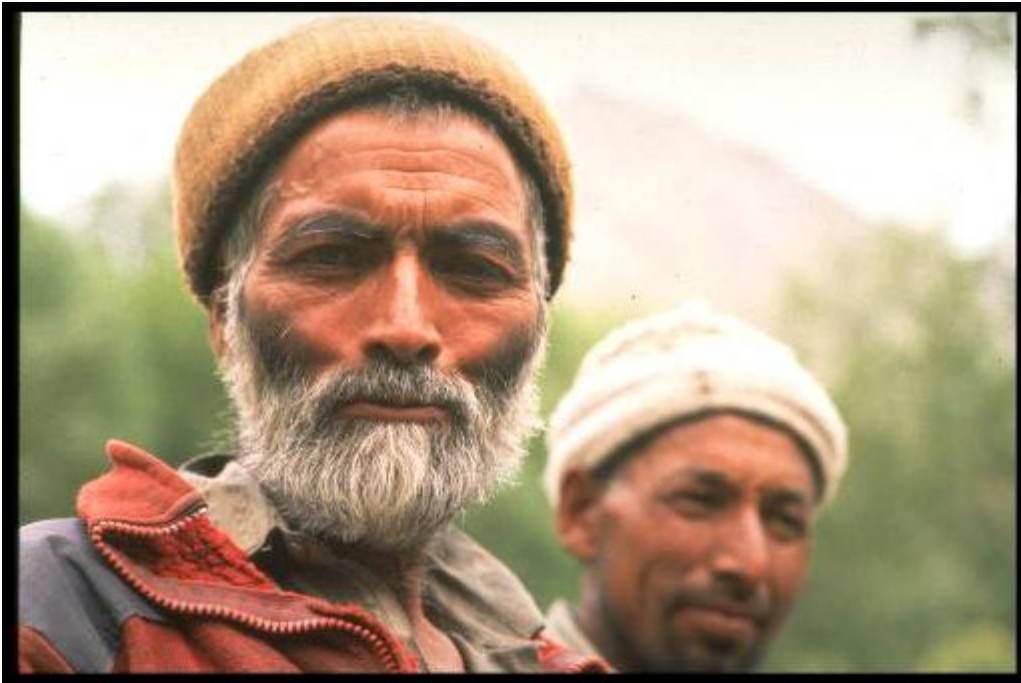
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3272946 bytes

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078.jpg (78 of 140)



and old. You can tell this fellow has been around a while, with his original Patagonia fleece jacket.

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Information

079.jpg

JPEG

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079.jpg (79 of 140)



These are the shoes these tough porter hike in--plastic and no socks, over glaciers and tough river crossings.

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Information

080.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4081584 bytes

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080.jpg (80 of 140)



Even when provided with a pack with padded straps, the porters preferred their hemp rope attachments.

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Information

081.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

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081.jpg (81 of 140)



Eventually we made it to our basecamp.

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Information

082.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4482947 bytes

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082.jpg (82 of 140)



There we had a ominous reminder of the dangers. This was a plaque for the Norwegians who died on the first ascent of the main face on Great Trango.

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Information

083.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3665958 bytes

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083.jpg (83 of 140)



This was our staging area, a full days trek from basecamp, and still 7 hours from the base of our route.

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Information

084.jpg

JPEG

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084.jpg (84 of 140)



Studiman, who was on our trip attempting Nameless Tower, found one of the helmets of the Norwegian climbers.

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Information

085.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4146550 bytes

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085.jpg (85 of 140)



We had to climb the approach gully in the dark, as it avalanched all day long. Ace Kvale came up with us one day and took this shot.

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Information

086.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4054498 bytes

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086.jpg (86 of 140)



Water was a big concern, as this wall was so sheer and overhanging that it had no ledges for snow to collect. So we brought one of our plastic barrels and let it fill with dripping water during the day (it became solid ice at night).

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Information

087.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4139209 bytes

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087.jpg (87 of 140)



Finally we got started on this beautiful wall. Here is Xaver and a friendly raven who accompanied us to around 18,000 feet.

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Information

088.jpg

JPEG

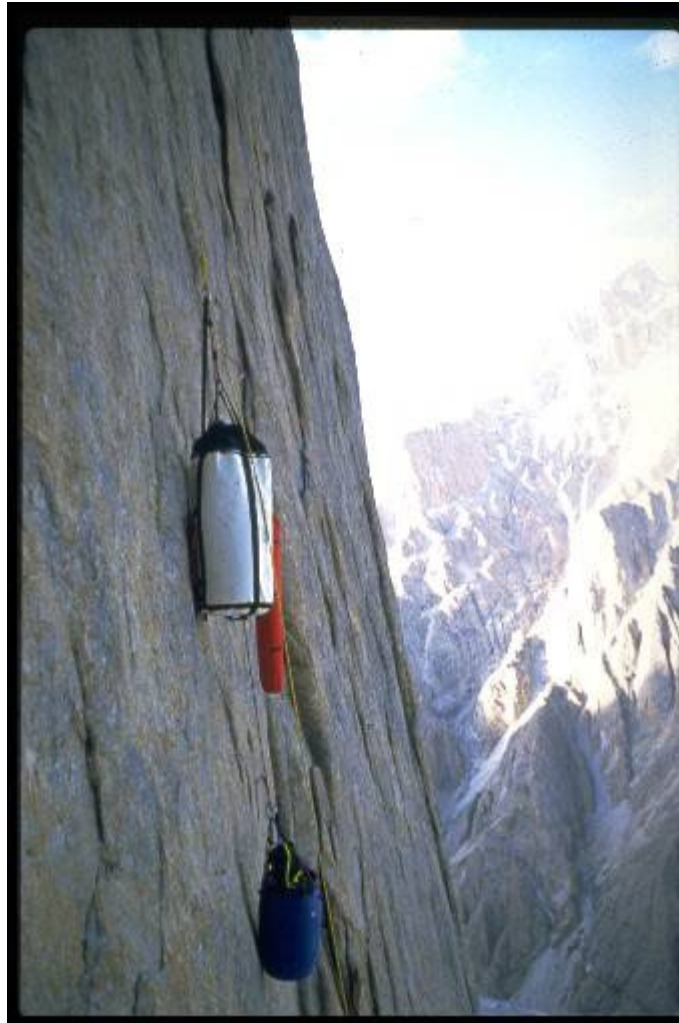
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3558686 bytes

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088.jpg (88 of 140)



One of our two hauls. The red bag is our A5 portaledge and the water barrel below.

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Information

089.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

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089.jpg (89 of 140)



For scale, this is Xavier and I and all our stuff on the wall...

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Information

090.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3300927 bytes

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090.jpg (90 of 140)



Here we are again on the right side.

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Information

091.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3411101 bytes

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091.jpg (91 of 140)



And here too, on the right. The apple shaped flake on the left can be used for reference in the next slide.

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Information

092.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3323570 bytes

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092.jpg (92 of 140)



Here you can see the apple shaped flake, but we are too small to be seen with the naked eye. (Photos courtesy of Ace Kvale, on the ground).

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Information

093.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3815098 bytes

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093.jpg (93 of 140)



Avalanches were a big concern on this route. Here you see what looks like small snowballs falling to our left. These were actually refrigerator sized ice chunks.

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Information

094.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3733854 bytes

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094.jpg (94 of 140)



Each avalanche came with a deafening roar. So terrifying, until the Doppler effect allowed us to know it was off to the left or right.

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Information

095.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3588019 bytes

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095.jpg (95 of 140)



Here's another avalanche coming down. Looks like spindrift, but to be under this one would have been death. You can see us on the right. We actually got hit by a avalanche there, but it was relatively small, even though it felt like 10,000 softballs being whipped at us from 500 feet above, knocking our lights out for a moment or two.

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Information

096.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3621804 bytes

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096.jpg (96 of 140)



After we got hit by the avalanche, we set up our bivy off to the side, and contemplated retreat, as the next section looked extremely dangerous and prone to avalanches from above.

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Information

097.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3686649 bytes

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097.jpg (97 of 140)



But we decided that we could climb the next 500 feet at night, when it was safer, which we did over two long nights.

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Information

098.jpg

JPEG

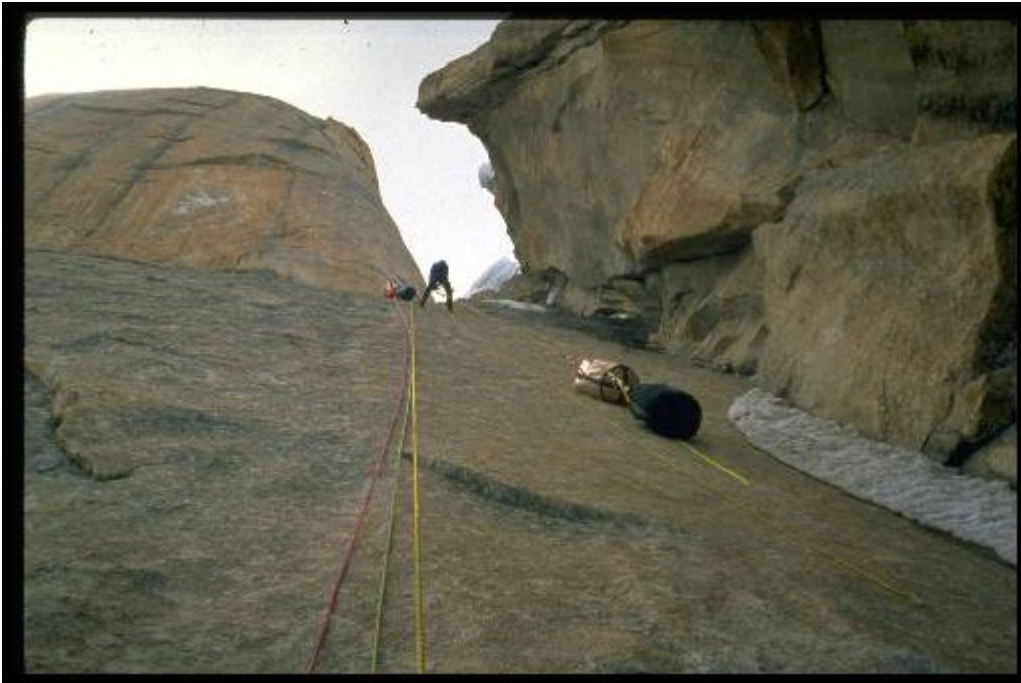
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 3824078 bytes

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098.jpg (98 of 140)



Early in the morning, after climbing all night, we hauled our bags up the treacherous "Gollum's Gulley".

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Information

099.jpg

JPEG

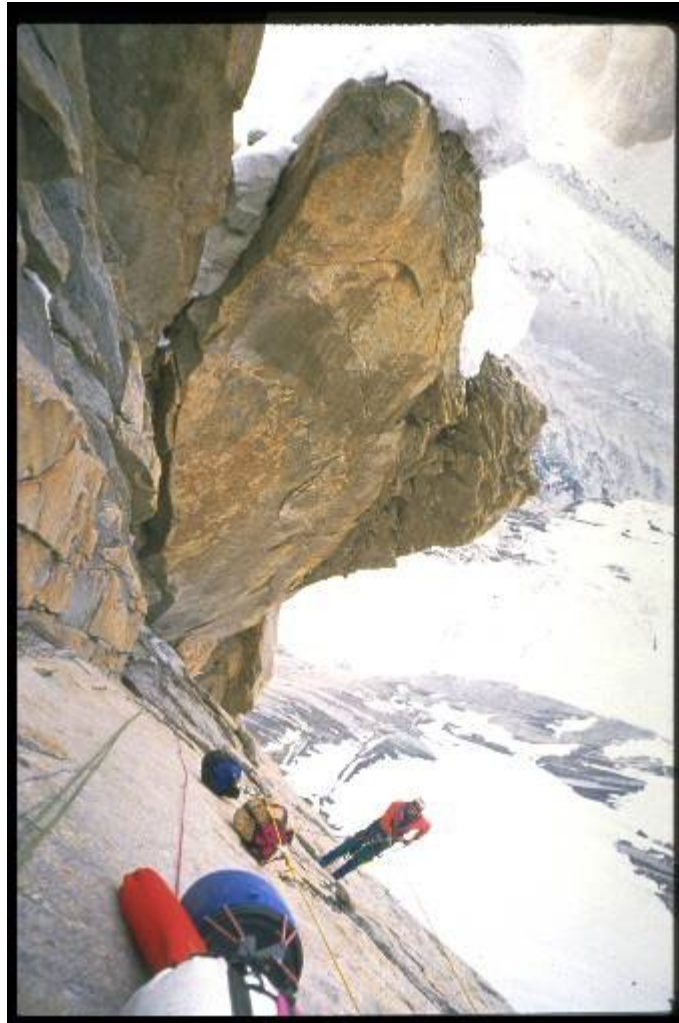
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3781523 bytes

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099.jpg (99 of 140)



Here you can see the ice pillows that were falling off during the day and channeling down the Gollums Gully.

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Information

100.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3548084 bytes

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100.jpg (100 of 140)



At this point after a week or so, we were half way up, where the sun meets the shadow.

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Information

101.jpg

JPEG

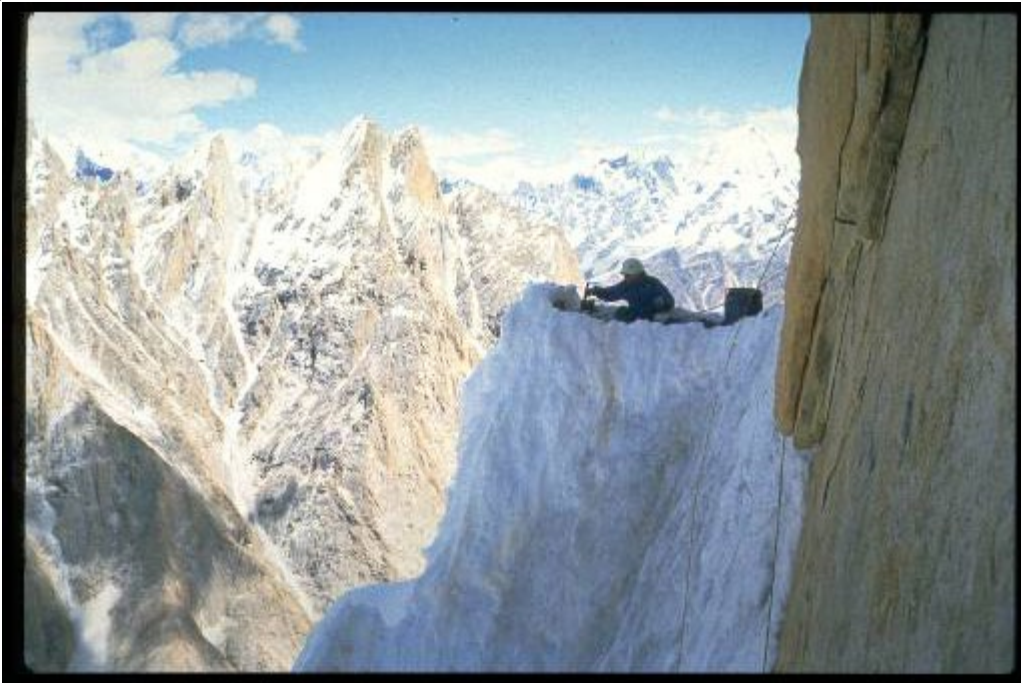
Resolution: 3072x2048

File size: 4262061 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 2:45 PM

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101.jpg (101 of 140)



Joy! We were able to shovel a platform out here, the only non-hanging bivouac of the climb.

Image activities

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Information

102.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3503349 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 2:46 PM

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102.jpg (102 of 140)



We cooked a cheese fondue to celebrate. Xaver, being Swiss had brought these along. Being American, I wasn't allowed to stir, as proper fondue stirring can only be achieved by a Swiss, I was told.

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Information

103.jpg

JPEG

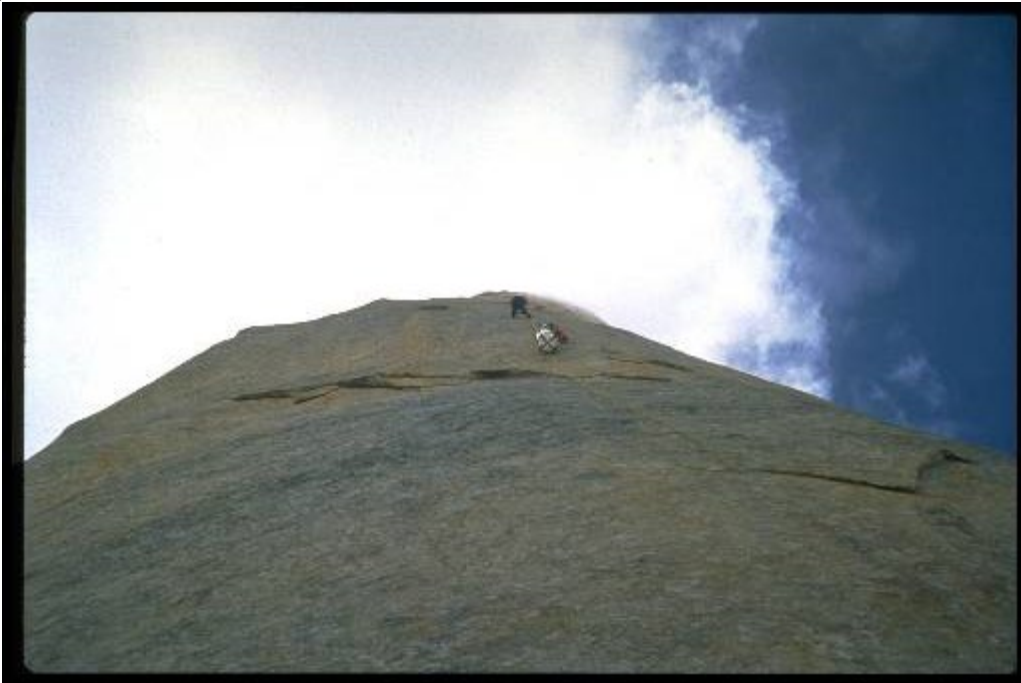
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After a few days on the marvelous snowledge, we were off on the upper 2200'

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104.jpg

JPEG

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These insulated Boreal boots were the key to the free climbing on the route.

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105.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4072492 bytes

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Climbing this 5.9+ offwidth at 19,000 feet, I was glad for my wide crack experience in Zion. Our largest cam was a #4 Friend.

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106.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

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We had had fairly good weather up to this point, but here, a big storm was coming in.

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Information

107.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

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We got hit by the storm in the middle of a technical pitch. I told Xavier to head back for the portaledge while I fixed the rope above. In the hour or so it took me to get things organized, the ropes had all turned to ice, and I had trouble getting back to our camp, which required rappeling below camp, as the route traversed here. After 20 minutes of screaming in the wind, Xavier finally heard and looked out of the ledge and was able to help me back up (my worn out Clog ascenders didn't grip on ice).

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108.jpg

JPEG

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For three days we were trapped in our ledge. Many times I went over the calculations of the design of the portaledge, as it flexed considerably in the buffeting wind, sometimes getting picked up a few inches and slamming down. The relentless whipping of the portaledge fly was deafening, and if it tore apart the exposure would have certainly been the end of us.

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109.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

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I had some good books, luckily. Xaver didn't like to read up on the wall, and was going stir crazy during this storm.

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110.jpg

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Our bags covered with ice.

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111.jpg

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Finally, some blue sky!

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112.jpg

JPEG

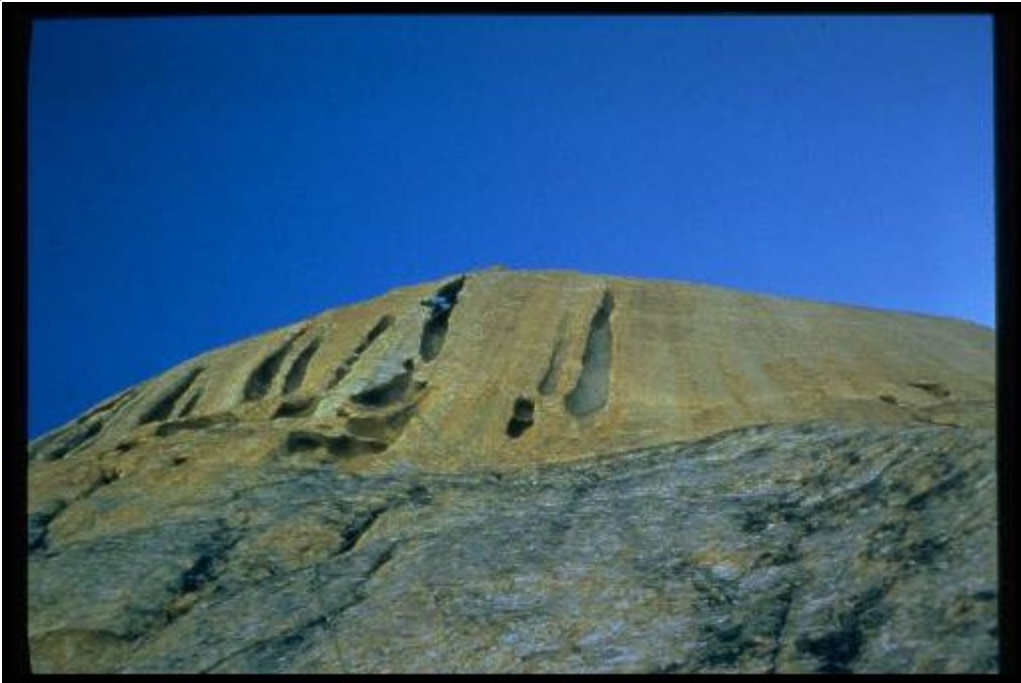
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Our last days we had spectacular weather. Here I am leading the wormholes pitch, the final steep rock pitch of the route.

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JPEG

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Looking down from the top of the wormholes pitch.

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114.jpg

JPEG

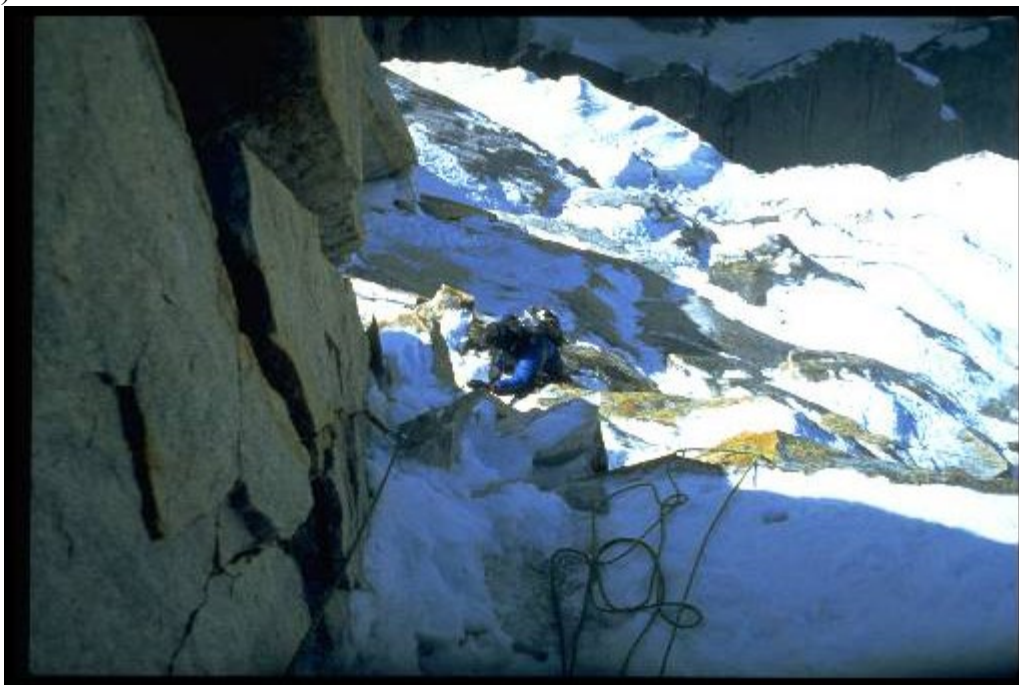
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You can see the rim far below. We thought it would be a quick jaunt to the summite, but it turned out to be six pitches of difficult mixed climbing from the rim, it took us all day.

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115.jpg

JPEG

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Then the final slog through chest deep snow from the storm.

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116.jpg

JPEG

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And finally the summit!!! Masherbrum and the Baltoro Glacier in the background.

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117.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

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We only had time for a few quick pics.

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118.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

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When I think of the why (do we do it), I think of this incredible view: from left to right, Mustaugh Tower; K2, the second highest mountain of the world; Broad Peak; and the Gasherbrum group. You can see the shadows of Nameless and Great Trango in the lower right.

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JPEG

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Our descent. After 2 days, we decided to toss a bag, thinking we could retrieve it shortly in the approach gully below.

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Information

120.jpg

JPEG

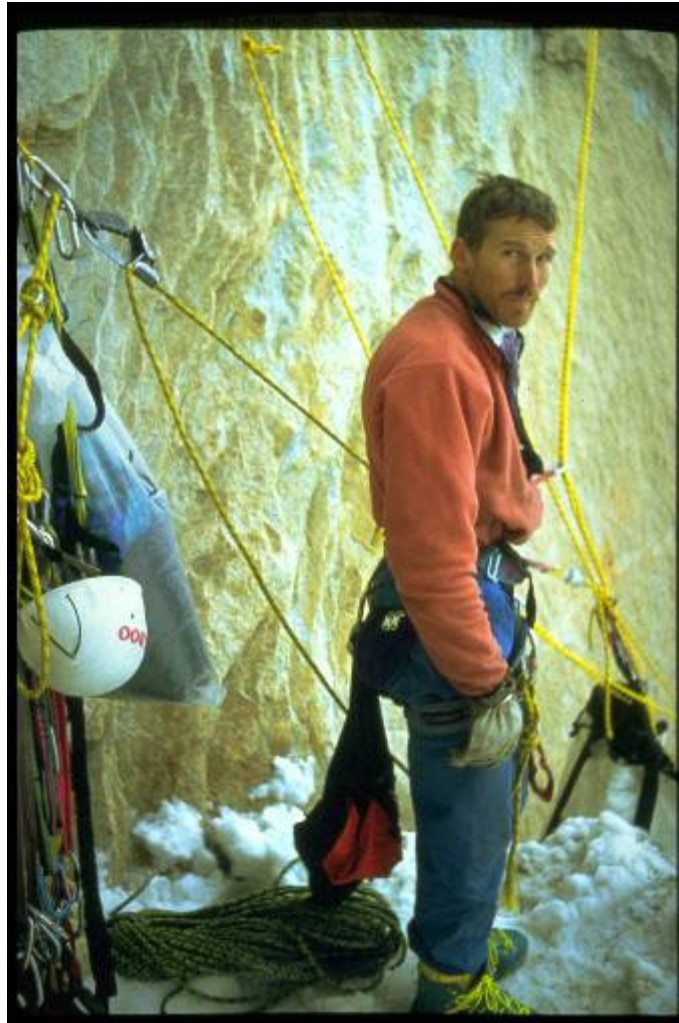
Resolution: 2048x3072

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120.jpg (120 of 140)



But unfortunately, the gully had become too dangerous, with a periodic slush avalanche coming down like clockwork every 20 minutes through a 20 deep newly formed channel which we had to cross. Here is Xaver when he realized our mistake of tossing our haulbag with all our bivy gear.

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121.jpg

JPEG

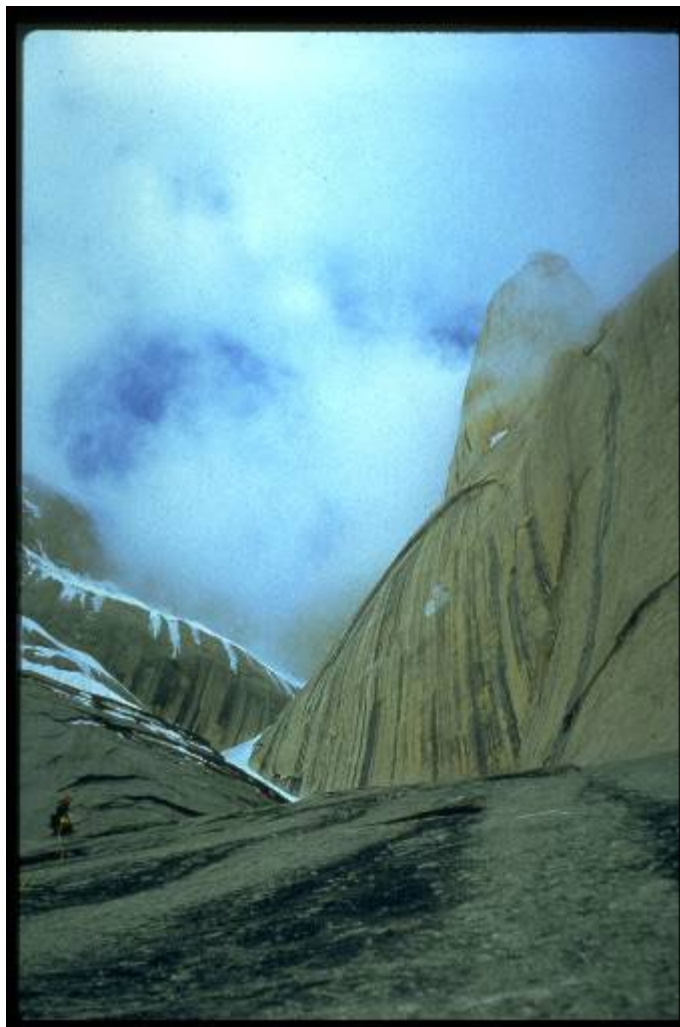
Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 4070467 bytes

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After a cold bivy with no gear at the base (16,000'), we crossed the gulley at first light, and began rappelling down the wall to the left of the approach gulley.

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122.jpg

JPEG

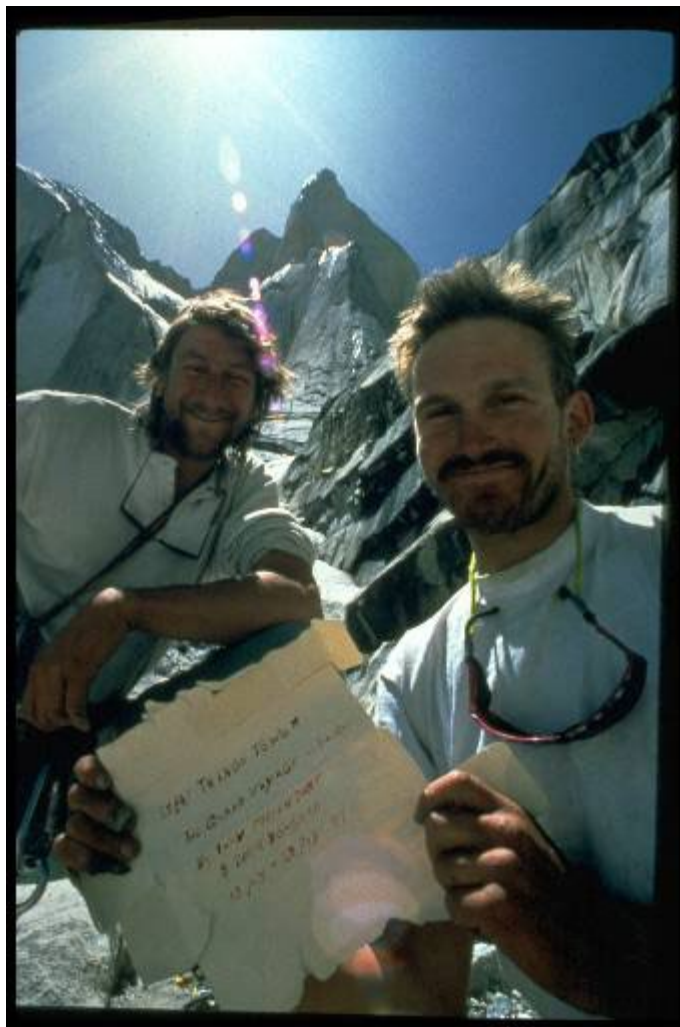
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File size: 3921307 bytes

Date: 1/20/03 2:51 PM

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122.jpg (122 of 140)



At the advanced camp, Ace came up and took our victory photo. Because we didn't have a pencil, Xaver wrote the message in his own blood, from one of his many cuts from the climb. It reads: Great Trango Tower, The Grand Voyage, John Middendorf, Xaver Bongard, 13 July to 28 July, 1992.

Image activities

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123.jpg

JPEG

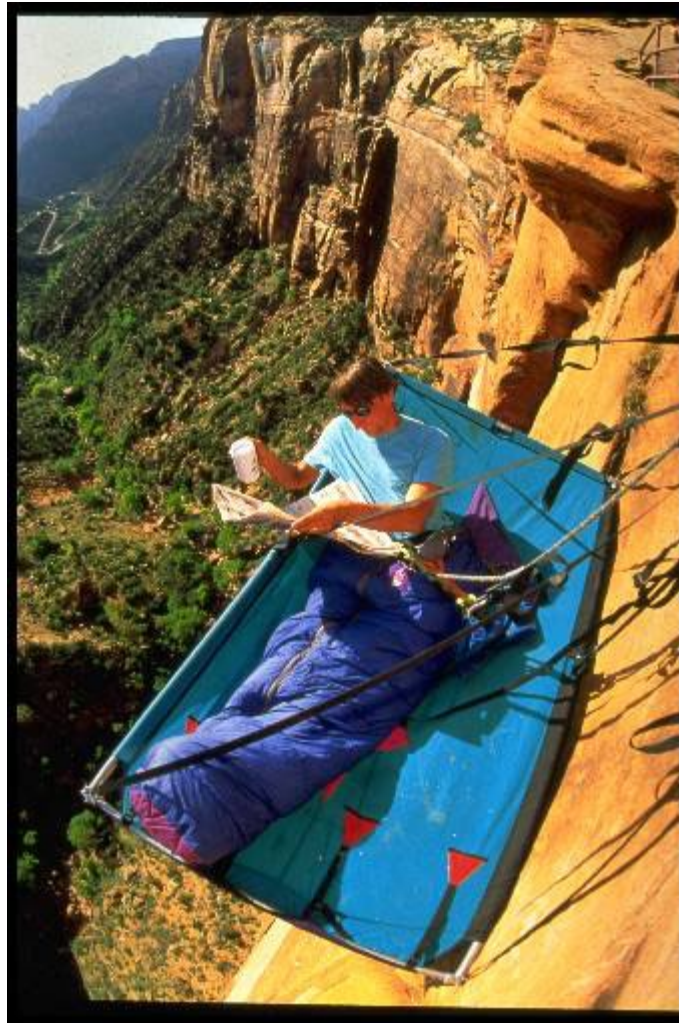
Resolution: 2048x3072

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After the Grand Voyage, I became more of a business man, designing even better portaledges.

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124.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

File size: 3666029 bytes

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This is the Diamond Ledge, aerodynamic and able to be anchored from below. Three people can live in this one.

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125.jpg

JPEG

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The birdbeak.

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126.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

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I also got into more film work, rigging this show called Rock and Road, starring Xaver!

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127.jpg

JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

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Here's the touching summit scene with Will Oxx and Beth Wald.

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128.jpg

JPEG

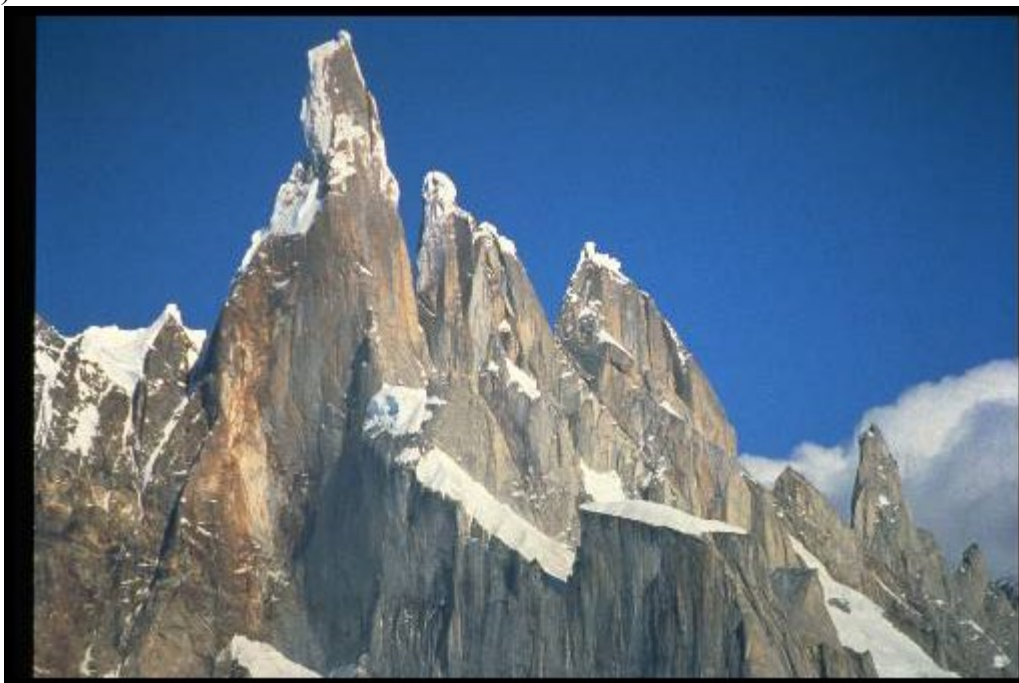
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In 1993 I did a few more expeditions, including one to Patagonia, where we climbed the compressor route on Cerro Torre in 14 hours from the snow camp on the shoulder.

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129.jpg

JPEG

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Here's some fine climbing with Fitzroy in the background.

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130.jpg

JPEG

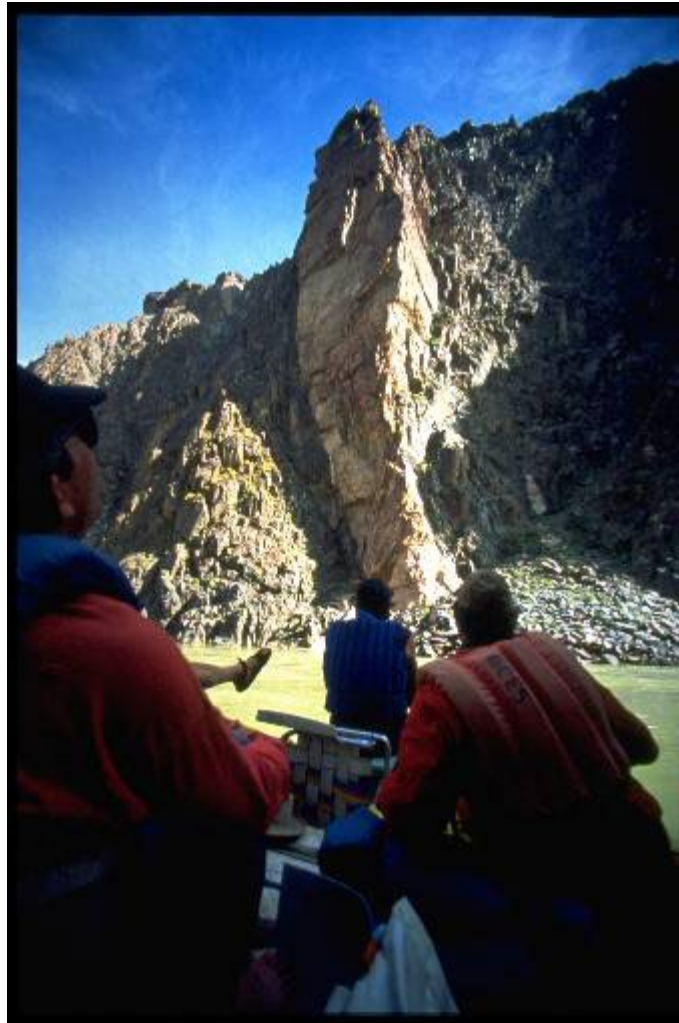
Resolution: 2048x3072

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Another adventure realm, in the Grand Canyon. Glen Rink arranged a climbing trip, where we made the second ascent of the 1000 foot Grapevine Butte, A3+, 5.10.

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131.jpg

JPEG

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After a river adventure, a climbing adventure, then more river adventure!

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JPEG

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With Silvo Karo I went to the Bhagaratti range in India. Our goal was the middle Bhagaratti IV.

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JPEG

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At the headwaters of the Bhagaratti river, also the headwater of the Ganges, I immersed in the ice water and then a pilgrim asked for a picture with me.

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JPEG

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We didn't make our climb (permit problems, actually we had none), but I saw the impact of expeditions on this beautiful place. This was left by a Korean team. I later wrote an article in Climbing on low impact expeditioning.

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That Korean team must not have seen this plaque.

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JPEG

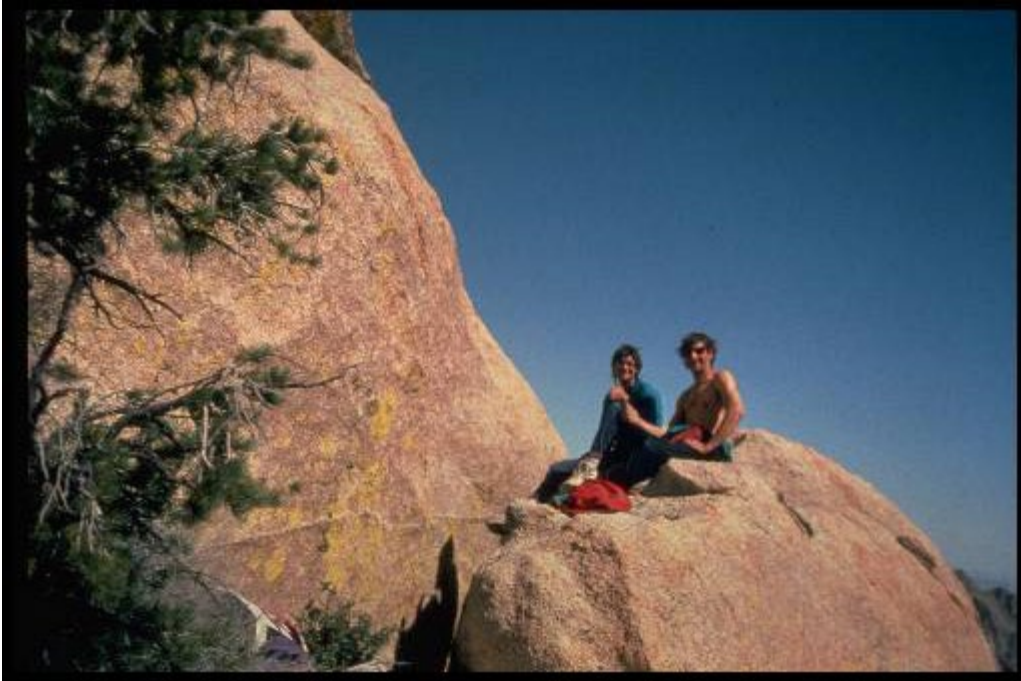
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To conclude, what is big wall climbing all about? It is about the companionship of good partners.

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137.jpg

JPEG

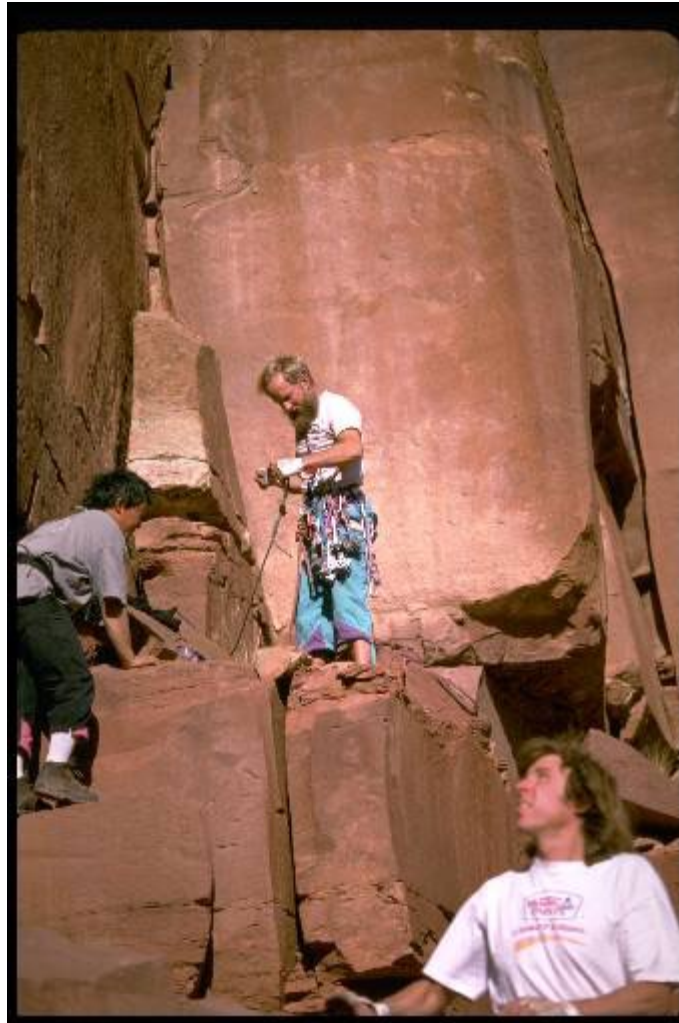
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Climbing with good friends...

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Information

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JPEG

Resolution: 2048x3072

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Sharing fine times in magic places...

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Information

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JPEG

Resolution: 3072x2048

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Great conversations over dinner...

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140.jpg

JPEG

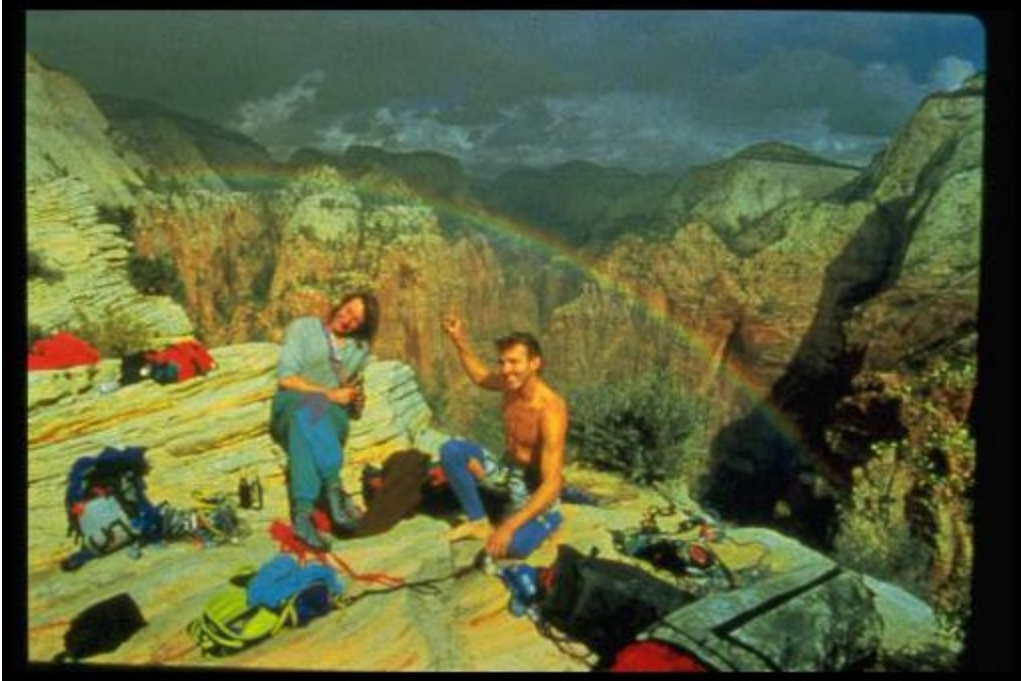
Resolution: 3072x2048

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And wonderful moments.

The end.



This is Abraham, a 2,000-foot sandstone mountain in Utah's Zion National Park. Visiting the desert will not be the most comfortable vacation choice you'll ever make. You'll face nightmare approaches and epic descents.

children of zion



The nailing is hard and the rock is loose. And then, of course, there's the heat. Sport climbing it ain't. **John Middendorf** recalls how he and Walt Shipley made the first ascent of The Radiator on Abraham's south face. Main picture by Bill Hatcher.

The current craze for sport climbing has definite advantages for the so-called traditional climber, namely, lessened competition for adventuresome unclimbed rock. Zion Canyon is an example, with its abundant unclimbed natural lines up huge steep sandstone rock walls. An area where the modern use of camming units, nuts, pitons and a few bolts can take a team 2,000 feet up a virgin, mostly overhanging clean and committing big wall complete with intense logistical aspects and much fear.

But one has to pause in order to ask, 'What's the point?'. I can understand the appeal of crags where the approaches are short, the commitment low and eventual success virtually guaranteed with time. Pushing a new wall route in Zion is the exact opposite.

Abraham, in Zion's magnificent Court of the Patriarchs canyon, is a huge mountain of sandstone with a completely sheer south face. Across the valley from Abraham lies the Sentinel, its north face resembling a cloaked spectre, dark and foreboding in the repose of a fearsome guard of its characteristically cleaner-looking neighbour, Abraham. The south face of Abraham first caught my eye after a summer thunderstorm, the wall shining with brilliant colours in the afternoon sun. It seemed on fire, charged with an unknown but abundant energy source and almost blinding in its radiant beauty. It drew me towards it, and I became instantly obsessed with the idea of climbing it. It reminded me of the intensity of emotion I felt upon seeing El Capitan in Yosemite for the first time, driving into Yosemite Valley on a full-moon night many years before. The chance to establish a route up this magnificent unclimbed wall inspired me and drove my life for the succeeding weeks.

After calling up my solid partner of many fine adventures past, Walt Shipley, we confirmed plans to meet in Zion. Walt and I have pulled off some good ascents

together: A new route – the Kali-Yuga – on Half Dome, the first winter ascent of Zenyatta Mendatta on El Cap, acid solos of various Yosemite 5.10s and 5.11s and assorted classic desert spires such as Moses, Zeus and the Titan. I had the suspicion that even as a strong team, this route on Abraham was going to push our limits of ability. Zion's intimidation factor aside, the wall was bigger and steeper than anything else in Zion, where the rule of thumb is to expect each 1,000 feet of sandstone to seem

'The pointlessness of committing to an extended trip in the vertical seems to encourage drinking in the nearest bar or venturing on shorter climbs.'

like 2,000 feet of granite.

Walt and I met in Springdale at the Rock House – the traditional staging ground – and after a few beers, went to scope the route. The mood was somewhat tense, as it often is before embarking on a major vertical journey. 'You gotta want those big jobs' is the mantra for the small circle of serious wall climbers in Yosemite. The pointlessness of committing to an extended trip in the vertical seems to encourage drinking in the nearest bar or venturing on shorter climbs instead of pursuing the transitory and sourceless inspiration to climb a big route.

With binoculars, we sat in the meadow below the route and viewed possible lines. We saw evidence of previous attempts up several crack systems near the base. One set of rappel anchors two pitches up the centre of the wall led to nowhere, obviously the result of an optimistic attempt to find some feature unseen from the ground. The main wall was entirely blank, completely devoid of any features. The huge buttress on its right flank looked promising, with obvious crack systems up either side. The left side of the buttress looked broken and serious, one 300 foot section

looking like vertical caving up a giant chimney filled with house-size loose blocks. We spotted a overhanging and beautiful thin crack system splitting the centre of the buttress. Investigating more closely, it appeared to blank out three-quarters of the way up. We hiked around to get a closer look and noticed rappel slings from high up on the right side of the buttress. Knowing Abraham to be unclimbed by any route, we were almost dismayed that someone had even gotten close, wanting the complete prize for ourselves. The right side looked all right, very long, not too steep and broken by a series of ledges and corners. The scale is immense, and seemingly small features looked like

general info

Legendary tales of loose rock, tenuous protection, epic descents, inhospitable climates, poisonous flora and fauna and wicked vertical bushwhacking keep most climbers from visiting Zion's sandstone cliffs. If you ever hear any of these tales, believe them and pass the word. But for those interested in true adventure regardless of objective hazards, Zion can provide. Zion National Park is host to many steep big walls, ranging from 600 feet to 2,200 feet, located along the Virgin River canyon and its drainages. The rock is sedimentary sandstone of many layers, each layer generally recognisable by its colour and varying widely in terms of looseness, softness and climbability.



several pitches on closer examination.

But then we saw it, the missing link for the awesome centre route, a right facing corner system, invisible from our previous viewing angle, that connected the lower crack system to the top. From no single vantage point can both crack systems be viewed clearly, but from different spots, the route became clear and continuous, albeit unrelentingly thin and technical. Committing, we fixed a pitch in a light Zion rainstorm, sheltered from the overhanging wall above.

We planned for four days, somehow not believing the wall was as big as it seemed. We brought a small bolt kit, limiting ourselves to 40 bolts to lighten our load and to increase our sense of commitment. We carried two haulbags which consisted of bivouac gear, portaledge, food and water for four days, and the usual big-wall monster load of hardware. Getting to the base of most Zion routes consists of bushwhacking up vertical gullies, and this route was no exception.

Location & details

Zion National Park is near the sleepy town of Springdale, Utah in the south-western corner of the state. It is a three-hour drive from Las Vegas, Nevada and a four-hour drive from Salt Lake City, Utah. Zion is a national park with its own rules and regulation system. It is up to the climbers to maintain good relations with the rangers to ensure future climbing in this beautiful area. Permits from the park service are required for any ascent requiring more than a day. Request a backcountry permit with exact details of the planned ascent at the Visitor's Centre which is also the home of the Zion climbing guidebooks, two volumes of semi-organised notes, comments, topos and

route information on most of the established routes in the park. There is no published Zion guidebook. Good camping is found at the National Park Campgrounds, located inside the park and at private campgrounds in Springdale which have showers available for two dollars. Water for filling water bottles is available at the Zion Lodge in Zion Canyon. Food is available in Springdale but for major shopping it is economical to go to a major supermarket in St George or Cedar City – about a one-hour drive. The Bit and Spur in Springdale – known nationally for its fine Mexican food – is a most excellent spot to drink and feast before and after a good wall ascent.



Our first day on the route went well. Four pitches up we were faced with our first major logistical problem. We had to cross over a huge corner and gully system in order to gain the base of the crack which split the centre of the overhanging wall above. Walt led across a bold unprotected 5.10+ section which led to the base of the crack which would take us 1,500 feet to the summit. But instead of hauling this section, which would have surely resulted in major snagging of the haulbag in the broken gully below, we left our bags perched on a ledge, and hauled after finishing the next pitch.

The next day I led a 5.9+ off-width for breakfast, unprotected and pumper in the hot Zion sun. The wall changed to overhanging, and already retreat was looking like a challenging potential in itself. We came to the realisation that we had underestimated the length and seriousness of the wall but continued on as all good climbers do in the face of uncertainty.

The next 1,000 feet looked like steep knifeblading up

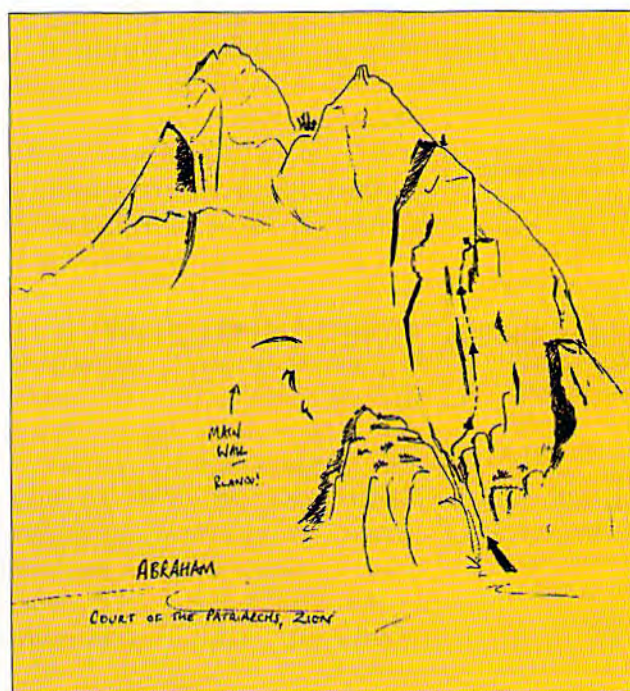
thin cracks. One soon learns, especially after cleaning a Zion sandstone aid pitch, that what would be an A1 placement in granite becomes instant A3; that is, even longer pitons are removed with merely a few hits from the hammer. Yet we revelled in the climbing, nailing our coveted knifeblades and birdbeaks repeatedly as we ascended.

Day three seemed like day four, or was it still day two? Time became surrealistic as we ascended. On pitch nine, after leading a thin expanding knifeblade pillar, I placed the first bolts of the route for a belay. Even though the previous five belays were in overhanging sandstone thin cracks, it was a point of pride between Walt and myself not to place any extraneous bolts, though we sacrificed both comfort and peace of mind because of this. Though the climbing had been consistently A3 or A3+ knifeblading – Zion sandstone ratings – we had been blessed to find belays in A1 or A2 sections at intervals concurrent with our rope length. It became a test of the mind to ignore the fact that any shockload from a fall on these natural belays would have likely ripped them out.

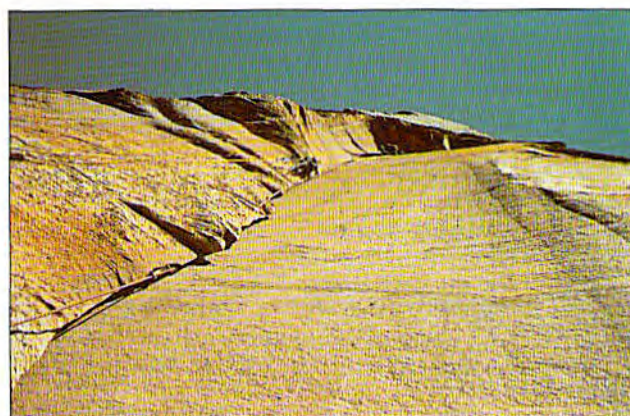
Three-quarters of the way up, we traversed right into the right facing corner system and Walt led a fabulous 5.10 hand crack, a nice reprieve from the endless knifeblading. We were not long for the summit, which loomed 500 feet above us



Above: Middendorf cleaning a pitch high on the face. Middle right: Abraham — left — and Isaac in Zion National Park, both offering scope for adventuresome climbing. Bottom right: Walt Shipley leading the excellent 5.10 hands pitch. Below: A topo outlining the route taken by Shipley and Middendorf.



BILL HATCHER



MIDDENDORF COLLECTION



Left: Middendorf rolling a cigarette during a recent trip to Europe. His ascent last year of The Grand Voyage on Great Trango Tower was the highlight of 1993.

but our provisions were definitely getting low. We recounted the days, and discovered that we would possibly top out on day four but that our water would never last that long. It was May in Zion, and the temperatures exceeded 100°F. We had planned four days, Yosemite rations; that is, a half gallon per person per day. But in the Utah desert heat, we needed more, though we were rationing and were severely dehydrated as it was.

Late on the fourth day, we reached the top of the buttress and drank the last of our water. We had only started out that morning with a half gallon for the two of us, making our consumption for the day about a pint

each. Not too good for the extremely hot conditions. Dehydration was starting to take its toll as our bodies became stiff and sore from lack of water.

The next morning we tossed one of the haulbags, sure it would be lost forever in the steep brushy gullies below. It disappeared out of sight, hit the wall, and rocketed outward to land smack on top of a boulder at its base. It was a shot in a thousand. Before the morning heat arrived, we made a dash for the summit, soloing 5.6 sandy slabs. The summit view was excellent, and we peered down the overhanging south face, wishing we had the gear and the experience to base-jump it for a quick descent.

Instead, we made our way down, clumsily due to the heat and the effects of the acute dehydration we were now experiencing. Which way down? After collecting our gear at the top of the buttress, we started what was to be fourteen long and tiresome rappels down the east flank of Abraham. We were in danger of running out of bolts, and sometimes only placed one bolt for an anchor in the soft and sandy rock. At one point the ropes got stuck. In our delirium of dehydration, we sat motionless on a small ledge for a while, wanting to sleep and be done with it. Then Walt, unanchored, suddenly got up and manically started jumping on the rope. Without warning the anchor pulled and Walt careened backward, almost falling off the ledge with the ropes. Unable to help, I had the grim vision of being stranded on this small ledge, unseen from anyone on the ground with Walt's broken body lying in the

hanging valley below, and waiting to die of thirst – which wouldn't have taken more than 24 hours. Walt did a couple of off-balanced hops on one leg at the edge of the cliff and somehow miraculously regained his stance. Wordlessly, we resumed our descent, realising that we had been given a second chance from a higher power.

After an eternity, we made it to the hanging valley, only to be tempted by stagnant, undrinkable pools of stinky water. Three more rappels from the hanging valley took us to a *bona fide* natural spring, and we gorged ourselves on the best water in Zion until we couldn't move. We named the route The Radiator, VI, 5.10+, A4. A name and grade which summarised a truly grand and extreme adventure. ■

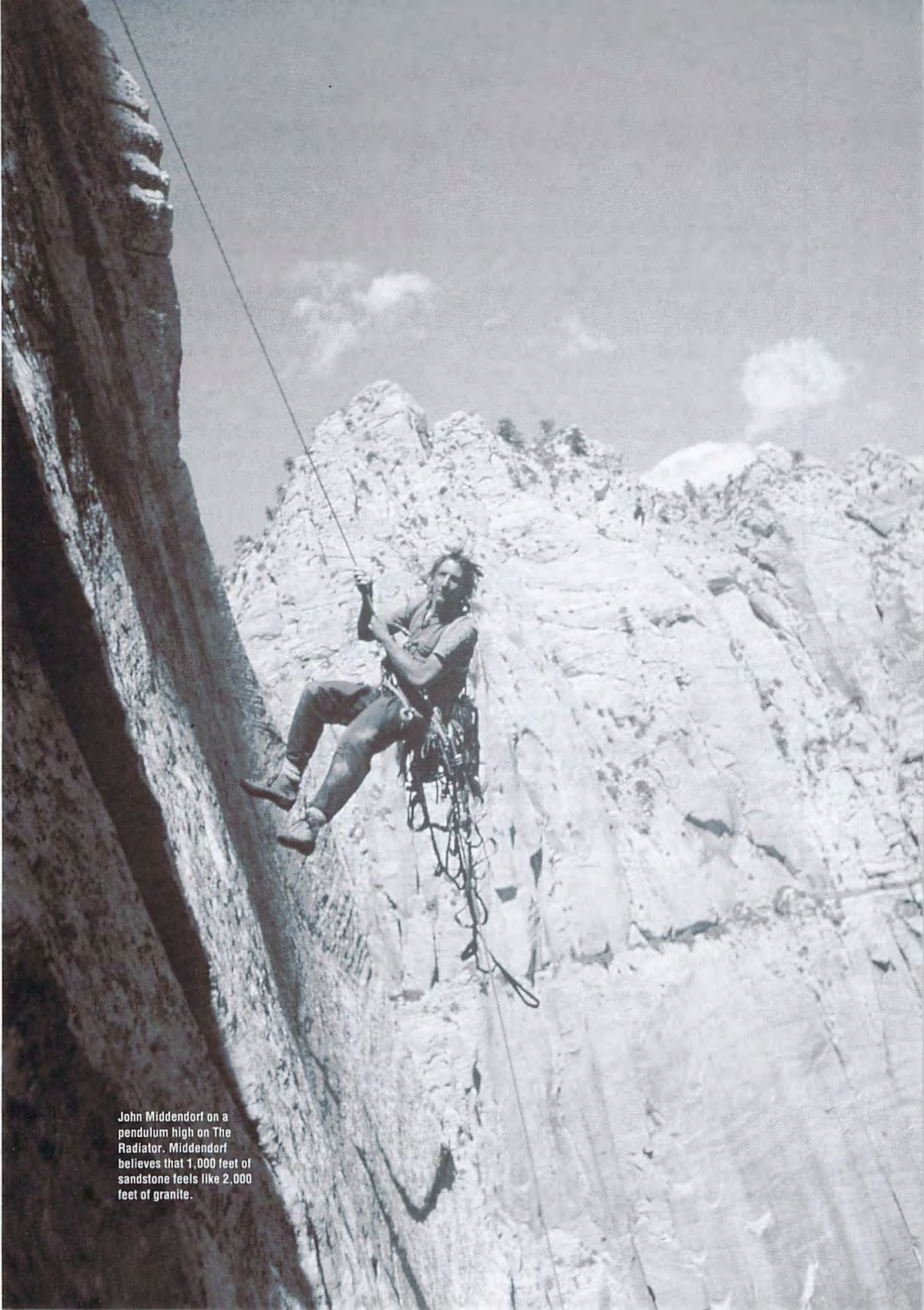
climate & environment

The weather in Zion goes to extremes. Average summertime temperatures – June through August – exceed 100°F and from November through December the average lows are below freezing. Winter ascents are possible, but beware of the serious immobility that snow-covered sandstone presents to the vertical adventurer. The best seasons are the spring and fall, the latter possibly being preferred. In late fall, the north face of Angel's Landing sees very little sun during the day. After a thunderstorm it is good policy not to climb on the rock for a few days as wet sandstone is very fragile.

Zion is a very well preserved wilderness area and climbers need to be aware of the impact humans have on the fragile desert landscape. Pack all trash up the

routes. Be aware of rock damage on the nailing routes when climbing in Zion, the rock often scars from careless or poor pitoncraft.

The easier routes do not require either pitons or a bolt kit. The nailing routes generally do not require any additional drilling, except perhaps at an occasional belay – some of the older bolts may need replacing. A small three-eighth inch bolt kit – two drills, five three-eighth inch by three and a half inch bolts and a few baby angles – suffices for the occasional anchor. Be prepared for very high nailing standards on the harder routes, the ratings used are subjective and are generally given modest ratings compared to the equivalent difficulty of a climb on granite.



John Middendorf on a pendulum high on The Radiator. Middendorf believes that 1,000 feet of sandstone feels like 2,000 feet of granite.